

School Admission Policies Update 2022

How Schools Still Refuse to Comply with Section 62.7(n) of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018



Atheist Ireland October 2022

“The Bill requires schools to publish an Admission Policy which will include details of the school’s arrangements for students who do not want to attend religious instruction. This is an important measure which will help ensure transparency from the outset as to how a school will uphold the rights of parents in this regard.”

Minister for Education Richard Bruton, during Oireachtas debate on Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 / Act 2018

Overview

Section 62.7(n) of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 obliges schools to publish an Admission Policy which must include details of the school's arrangements for students who do not want to attend religious instruction.

The purpose of this requirement is to protect the inalienable Constitutional rights of parents by providing transparency from the outset so that parents know these details before they choose a school for their children. However, it has failed to do this.

Two years ago, in October 2020, we examined how 100 sample schools address this requirement in their Admission Policies. We brought the results to the attention of the Department of Education. This year, in October 2022, we have re-examined those same 100 schools, and the situation has not changed:

- Most denominational schools still try to evade the requirement by stating that parents must seek a meeting with the Principal to discuss the arrangements.
- Most ETB schools still try to evade the requirement by making a spurious distinction with no legal basis between religious instruction and religious education.
- Most schools still do not address the right to not attend the class, i.e. the right to physically leave the classroom and be supervised or get another subject.
- Some schools still unlawfully ask parents to give reasons for wanting their children to not attend religion classes thus breaching the right to privacy and GDPR.

On the underlying issue of guaranteeing the right to not attend religious instruction, the Department of Education has failed to administer Constitutional rights and the will of the Oireachtas as reflected in legislation. Not only that, but the Department won't even administer the legal obligation of schools to write the arrangements for students not attending religious instruction into their Admission Policies.

Also, since our first report, the Supreme Court found in the recent *Burke v Minister for Education* case that the Department of Education has a duty to respect the Constitutional rights of parents while translating government policy or legislation into an administrative scheme.

The Supreme Court also found that the State cannot interfere in the inalienable right of parents under Article 42.1 of the Constitution to provide the religious, moral and social education of their children. Parents have a right to provide religious and moral education to their children at home or in schools recognised or funded by the state (Article 42.2).

Parents are not obliged to accept any religious and moral education offered by the school or the state through the curriculum. The state cannot interfere in this right and has a duty to respect it. Art 42.4 obliges the state when funding schools to have due regard for the rights of parents in relation to the religious and moral formation of their children. The Supreme Court said this is a foundational pillar of the Constitution.

The Supreme Court has also said (*Campaign case*, 1998) that the right of parents under Article 42.1 must be read in the context of Article 44.2.4, the right to not attend religious instruction.

These are the Constitutional rights that the Department of Education has failed to administer.

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1. The Requirements of Section 62.7(n) of the Act

Section 62.7(n) of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 states that:

“62.7 An Admission Policy shall...

(n) provide details of the school’s arrangements in respect of any student, where the parent of that student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, has requested that the student attend the school without attending religious instruction at the school (which arrangements shall not result in a reduction in the school day in respect of the student concerned)”

What is the purpose of this requirement? Here are some quotes about it from Minister for Education Richard Bruton during the Oireachtas debate:

“The Bill also requires schools to publish an Admission Policy which will include details of the school's arrangements for students who do not want to attend religious instruction. This is an important measure which will help ensure transparency from the outset as to how a school will uphold the rights of parents in this regard.”

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2016-11-16/37/>

Section 62 “sets some mandatory requirements for a school’s Admission Policy, which include: setting out the characteristic spirit of the school; including an admission statement; providing details of the school's arrangements for students who do not wish to attend religious instruction”

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2016-11-16/37/>

“What we are really discussing is how to address the absolute constitutional right of a child to opt out of the religious activities within the school, if he or she chooses.”

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2018-05-30/33/>

“We are strengthening the provision to meet the constitutional right of every child not to have to attend religious instruction. This will be enforced by requiring it to be explicitly stated in the admissions policy of religious schools as to how they propose to honour that. We are introducing a charter for parents and students to ensure that they will have more say over time in all of the dimensions of school policy. In the case of multi-denominational ETB schools at second level, we will ensure that religion is treated as an option and not as a compulsory subject. We are making several changes which are going to give rise to a much improved environment.”

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2018-05-29/43/>

“There is the matter of issuing directions and we have made a significant change in this Bill. Before a child enrolls in a school, the school would have to set out the policy it provides with respect to attending religious instruction. This is an area where there has been a good deal of evolution and we must see more.”

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/seanad/2018-07-04/15/>

“In this Bill I am also requiring schools to set out in their admissions policies how they will accommodate children who are exercising a constitutional right not to attend religious instruction. I have also indicated to schools operating under the multi-denominational education and training board, ETB, banner at second level that they have an obligation to talk to the parents of pupils about what the parents want and to provide a real curricular option for children at second level in those schools as an alternative to religion.”

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/seanad/2018-06-20/8/>

It is clear that the purpose of this requirement is to protect the inalienable Constitutional rights of parents by providing transparency from the outset so that parents know these details before they choose a school for their children. However, it has failed to do this.

2. How Schools are Not Complying with Section 62.7(n) of the Act

2.1 Most denominational schools try to evade the requirement by stating that parents must seek a meeting with the Principal to discuss the arrangements.

This breaches the both the letter of Section 62.7(n) and the stated intention of the Minister in drafting it. Asking people to seek a meeting with the Principal is not the same thing as including the details in the Admission Policy. The purpose of including the details in the Admission Policy is to avoid this type of scenario, by making the details transparent and available to parents before they choose whether or not to send their child to the school.

It is the Board of Management, under the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, that is obliged to put in place policy in relation to the arrangements for students who exercise their right to not attend religious instruction. There is no point in any meeting with the Principal because he/she cannot legally decide on policy.

In all schools that require parents to attend a meeting with the Principal to discuss their right to remove their child from religious instruction, one of three alternatives is happening. Either:

- The Board has failed to comply with its legal obligation to put in the Admission Policy the arrangements for students who exercise their right to not attend religious instruction; or
- The Principal already knows the arrangements that the Board has put in place, and the school has decided not to publish it in their Admission policy; or
- The Principal is just making up policy on this issue as he or she go along, when they have no legal standing to do so.

Whichever of these three alternatives is happening, the school is not complying with the legal requirements of Section 62.7(n). Further, the Department of Education is aware of this, and is failing in its legal duty, as articulated by the Supreme Court, to translate Section 62.7(n) into an administrative scheme that respects the Constitutional rights of parents.

2.2 Most ETB schools try to evade the requirement by making a spurious distinction with no legal basis between religious instruction and religious education.

The wording that most ETB schools use in their response is “Religious instruction is a term used in Ireland to indicate instruction in accordance with the rites, practices and teaching of a particular religion or denomination for pupils of that religious tradition. Religious education is open to all pupils regardless of their commitment to any particular religion or worldview.”

But the phrase “is a term used in Ireland” has no source or legal standing. The Supreme Court has already made a different legal distinction between these terms in the Campaign Case in 1998. It described ‘Religious Instruction’ as the classroom subject that a child can choose to not attend, and it associated ‘Religious Education’ with the ethos and general atmosphere of the school. The word ‘Instruction’ in the Education Act refers to the teaching of any subject.

In the *Burke v the Minister for Education* case in the Supreme Court, the Court found that the purpose of Article 42.1 was non-interference in the rights of parents. The Court found that:

“It is, in any event, part of the right and duty of parents to provide (and therefore the right of their children to receive) education under Article 42.1, which right the State has guaranteed to respect. The Irish text of Article 42.1 provides an important flavour in this regard:

“... ráthaíonn [An Stát] gan cur isteach ar cheart doshannta ná ar dhualgas doshannta tuistí chun oideachas ... a chur ar fáil dá gclainn”

which conveys the sense that the State cannot interfere with (cur isteach ar) the right of parents subject to the Constitution to provide education under Article 42.1, a right which Article 42.2 contemplates may take place at home."

The Department of Education, schools and teachers have no right to decide for parents what is or is not suitable religious and moral education for their children. The very purpose of Article 42.1 is 'non-interference' in the rights of parents. It is now being used to undermine its very purpose and consequently the Department of Education is failing to administer constitutional rights. The rights of parents are derived from the text and structure of the Constitution and upheld by the Supreme Court. The Oireachtas has legislated for them but the Department of Education has failed to administer these inalienable rights.

The Legal Opinion that Atheist Ireland obtained makes clear that it is not the case that Religious Instruction is confined to teaching in accordance with the rites, practices and teaching of a particular religion. Article 44.2.4 says nothing whatsoever about religious instruction relating to one religion only. If a Muslim or Hindu can choose to not attend a class about Catholicism, then an atheist can choose to not attend a class about multiple religions.

When the Education Act 1998 was passed the then Minister for Education Micheal Martin said in response to a Dail question:

"Article 44.2.4° is supported by other constitutional provisions, notably Article 42 relating to the primary role of parents as the educators of their children and their rights in respect of any violation of their conscience. These constitutional guarantees are supported by statutory provisions enacted both before and after the adoption of the Constitution... section 30(2)(e) (of the Education Act 1998) provides that the Minister shall not require a student to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of his or her parent or of the student where he or she is 18 or over."
<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1999-02-16/212/>

So the right in the Education Act to not attend instruction in any subject that is contrary to conscience, arises from the Constitutional rights under Article 44.2.4 to not attend Religious Instruction and under Article 42 to protect the inalienable rights of parents from violation of their conscience, and it has the same Constitutional protection. This includes the type of class that these Admission Policies spuriously describe as Religious Education.

2.3 Most schools do not address the right to not attend the class, i.e. the right to physically leave the classroom and be supervised or get another subject.

Many schools suggest that children can stay in the religion class but not participate in it. Some say that they do not have the resources to supervise children outside of the class. But the legal opinion obtained by Atheist Ireland makes clear that this is not a valid argument. It makes the following points:

From a Constitutional perspective, the right protects more than sitting at the back of a religion class or even leaving the school while it is being taught. It encompasses, at the very least, the right to leave the classroom during religious instruction while remaining supervised or to be taught another subject. As between these two possibilities, there is a decent argument that schools should not give more teaching time to some students over others on the basis that the latter has opted out as to do so is to discriminate against the student on religious grounds.

Also, schools are Constitutionally obliged to use their existing State funding to facilitate the right to not attend without demanding extra State funding. Provided the school is a public school receiving some State funding, the right must be respected, whether or not the funding is adequate. To come to any other conclusion would render the enjoyment of the right to not attend religious instruction contingent on the level of funding. Yet, this would fly in the face of the plain text of Article 44.2.4°.

It is clearly established that private entities (i.e. entities other than State bodies) may be held liable for breaches of Constitutional rights. Therefore, schools are required to observe the constitutional rights of enrolled children. There is a separate and express duty on the State to ensure that legislation is such as will not prejudicially affect that right. However, provided a school receives some funding, the right is not contingent on the level of that funding and must be vindicated by the school.

Note that this is not arguing that schools have to conjure up extra resources in the middle of a school year. It is arguing that schools must find out what parents want before they plan each school year, then allocate their resources and set their timetables for the coming year based on that information.

2.4 Some schools unlawfully ask parents to give reasons for wanting their children to not attend religion classes of any description thus breaching the right to privacy.

Asking parents to give reasons for not wanting to attend religion classes breaches Article 44.2.4 of the Constitution, Section 30.2(e) of the Education Act, and the right to private and family life under human rights law.

It also breaches GDPR. Circular Letter 0062/2018 from the Department of Education states:

“GDPR places an increased emphasis on transparency, accountability, and security standards for personal data. Schools should note that the clarification in section 2 about the content and delivery of the Department-approved NCCA Religious Education syllabus means that there should be no requirement for the school to seek information from parents or students about whether or not they are of any religion, and in section 4 of this circular it is a matter for a parent to come forward where a school is proposing to offer religious instruction rather than the school seeking information from parents about their religion.”

3. 40 Sample Catholic Primary Schools

In our first report, 30 of the 40 Catholic primary schools that we looked at wrote as the substance of their arrangements that: “A written request should be made to the Principal of the school. A meeting will then be arranged with the parent(s) to discuss how the request may be accommodated by the school.”

[Update: This remains the same today.](#)

3.1 Schools that propose only that parents request a meeting

In our first report, 15 of the Catholic primary schools that we looked at wrote only the above proposal for requesting a meeting.

- Scoil Cholmcille, Lifford, Donegal ¹
- Tallanstown National School, Dundalk ²
- St. Attracta’s National School Ballaghaderreen ³
- Coole National School, Kilcock, Meath ⁴
- Our Lady of Good Counsel Boys’ School, Dun Laoghaire ⁵
- Ticknevin national School, Kildare ⁶
- Scoil Ursula, Sligo ⁷
- St. Mary’s B.N.S Rathfarnham ⁸
- St. Finian’s N.S. Meath ⁹
- Crehana N.S. Waterford ¹⁰
- Holy Family G.N.S., Askea, Carlow ¹¹
- Scoil Mhuire Mount Sackville ¹²
- Castledockrell National School Enniscorthy Wexford ¹³
- Gaelscoil Liatroma ¹⁴
- Holy Family National School Rathcoole ¹⁵
- Saint Patrick’s National School Skerries ¹⁶

[Update: These remain the same today, apart from Holy Family G.N.S., Askea, Carlow, which did not have an admission policy linked to on its website when we last checked it.](#)

In our first report, seven of the Catholic primary schools that we looked at preceded the above with the following statement: “Our school is of a Catholic ethos and, in keeping with that ethos, children of all or no other faith are welcome to apply to this school. We respect the decision of parents to withdraw their child/children from taking part in the religious education curriculum, religious ceremonies, school Masses, etc.”

- St John’s National School, Kenmare ¹⁷
- Scoil Mhuire Murroe, Limerick ¹⁸
- Ahane National School, Limerick ¹⁹
- Lisnagry, Limerick ²⁰
- St. Patrick’s N.S. Bruree Limerick ²¹
- Silvermines N.S. Tipperary ²²
- Scoil Náisiúnta Cillín Liath ²³

[Update: These remain the same today.](#)

In our first report, one Catholic primary school added the same proposal for requesting a meeting about not attending the church for practices and/or events during school hours. This remains the case today.

- Scoil Bhride Lann Leire, Dunleer, Louth ²⁴

[Update: This remains the same today.](#)

3.2 Schools that add extra information about the request for a meeting

In our first report, six of the Catholic primary schools that we looked at wrote the above proposal for requesting a meeting, and added further details.

“Written requests by the parents/guardians will be considered on a case by case basis.”

- Gaelscoil na Dúglaise, Cork ²⁵

“Definite arrangements will be set out during this meeting to accommodate the student during religious instruction.”

- Saint Ultan’s Special School, Navan, Meath ²⁶ (Special school, see details in footnote)

“During religious instruction the child will be assigned work appropriate to her/his class. This work will have to be completed in the classroom as supervision of individual children, outside of the classroom, is not possible due to lack of staff to supervise and lack of accommodation to facilitate. Alternatively parents may collect their child from school for the duration of the religious instruction.”

- Glengoolle National School, Thurles, Tipperary ²⁷

“With the agreement of the parent(s), the child will be assigned activities in another subject area and he/she will remain in the classroom during Religious Education classes.”

- Durrow National School, Offaly ²⁸

“Withdrawal from religious education classes: Drinagh National School respects and acknowledges the rights of parents/guardians who require their son/daughter to be excluded from religious education. The manner in which such an ‘opt out’ is facilitated is related to available resources within the school and complies with the school’s policies on curriculum, supervision and child safeguarding. In the circumstance where a request for ‘opt out’ is made, the child may stay within the classroom following an educationally appropriate activity e.g. reading a novel, catching up on unfinished work etc.”

- Drinagh National School, Cork ²⁹

“Parents are welcome to view the school’s Religion programme if they so wish. This can be arranged through the school office. Children who are not members of the Catholic faith will not be required to participate in any activities relating to the Catholic faith. During religious education lessons they will be assigned other appropriate work which must be conducted in the classroom during religion lessons. St. Comán’s Wood Primary school cannot undertake to teach children of other faiths in their own faith, nor can it provide supervision during the religious education period apart from within the class.”

- St. Comán’s Wood Primary School, Roscommon ³⁰

Update: These remain the same today.

3.3 Other approaches by primary schools

In our first report, two Catholic primary schools did not propose requesting a meeting. These schools wrote:

“Students not attending religious education will be allowed to remain in the class or attend another class if requested by the parent / guardian. The child will do work set by the teacher, or work provided by the parent / guardian.”

- Polasaí Iontrála Ghaelscoil Uí Riada ³¹

“1. Students will be provided with school work to complete during religious education lessons. 2. During visits to the church, students will be permitted to stay in school and join another class for the duration of the visit.”

- Darrara National School, Clonakilty, Cork ³²

Update: These remain the same today.

There are 33 Christian Brothers primary schools that operate under the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. In our first report, we examined a sample four of these:

- Gaelscoil Sairseal Limerick - does not refer to requirements of Section 62.7(n) ³³
- Drimnagh Castle Primary School Dublin - proposes meeting with principal ³⁴
- O'Connell CBS Dublin - may be excused from participation but must stay in class ³⁵
- Bunscoil McAuley Rice - proposes meeting with principal ³⁶

Update: These remain the same today.

In our first report, another four Catholic schools in Drogheda have this common policy: “While Catholic education and ethos permeates the day, children of other faiths or none, are welcome to apply to enrol. They may, on request, be excused from participation in formal religious instruction and Catholic activities. However, the school shall not be expected to excuse them from the class and or provide supervision for same while formal religious instruction and activities take place.”

- St. Joseph's CBS, Sunday Gate, Drogheda ³⁷
- St. Oliver's NS, Ballymakenny Rd, Drogheda (also seeks a meeting) ³⁸
- Presentation Primary School, Ballymakenny Rd, Drogheda ³⁹
- St. Brigid's & St. Patrick's, Bóthar Brugha, Drogheda ⁴⁰

Update: These remain the same today.

4. 25 Sample Catholic Second Level Schools

23 of the 25 Catholic Second Level schools that we looked at wrote as the substance of their arrangements that: “A parent of a student, or a student who has reached the age of 18, who wishes to attend the school without attending religious instruction should make a written request to the Principal. A meeting will be then be arranged with the parent(s) or the student, as the case may be, to discuss how the request may be accommodated by the school.”

Update: These remain the same today.

4.1 Schools that propose only that parents request a meeting

In our first report, 12 of the Catholic Second Level schools that we looked at wrote only the above proposal for requesting a meeting:

- Colaiste Bride, Enniscorthy, Wexford ⁴¹
- Jesus & Mary Secondary School, Salerno, Galway ⁴²
- St Mary’s Secondary School, Holy Faith, Glasnevin ⁴³
- Presentation Secondary School Listowel, Kerry ⁴⁴
- St. Mary’s Secondary School Newport, Tipperary ⁴⁵
- Patrician Secondary School, Newbridge, Kildare ⁴⁶
- Dominican College Muckross Park, Dublin ⁴⁷
- Scoil Dara Kilcock ⁴⁸
- Saint Peter’s, Wexford ⁴⁹
- Our Lady’s College, Drogheda ⁵⁰
- St Mary’s College Arklow ⁵¹
- New Cross College Finglas West Dublin ⁵²

Update: These remain the same today.

4.2 Schools that add extra information about the request for a meeting

In our first report, 11 of the Catholic Second Level schools that we looked at added extra information about the request for a meeting:

One Catholic Second Level school preceded the above with the following statement: “Religious Education is provided in the school in such a way, that all students, whether of a particular religious affiliation or none, can freely and actively participate in the classes.”

- Loreto College Cavan ⁵³

Three of the Catholic Second Level schools that we looked at wrote the above proposal for requesting a meeting, and added further details:

“Please contact the Principal to discuss this matter.”

- Hamilton High School, Bandon, Cork ⁵⁴

“...within the limited staffing resources made available by the Department of Education and Skills.”

- Loreto Secondary School, Wexford ⁵⁵

“Religious Education is a core Junior Cycle subject in Presentation College Bray. Students will not be given the option of studying another subject during timetabled RE classes. In the case of students who wish to opt out of Religious Education classes at post Junior Cycle level, it is expected, as Presentation College Bray is a Catholic school, that students would remain in class and follow the programme being delivered. No alternative subject will be available to students during scheduled RE classes. See also Section 2 (Programmes) of this application form.”

- Presentation College Bray ⁵⁶ (see footnote for more details)

Update: These remain the same today.

There are 62 CBS Christian Brothers secondary schools run by the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. In our first report, the sample seven that we looked at used a common template presumably coordinated by the Trust. This common response states:

“Parents/Guardians of students and students (over 18) who wish to opt out of Religious Education (RE) class should make a written request to the principal. A meeting will then be arranged with the parent/guardian or the student, as the case may be, to discuss their options. Throughout this process the constitutional right of the parent/student (over 18 years) will be respected by the school. The 1998 Education Act states that schools are required to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students (Section9 (d)). At [name of school] the allocated time on the timetable for Religious Education responds to this. Students who opt out of RE class are required to use this time to study material relating to their own religious tradition or belief, for example sacred texts. Students of no religious faith, who opt out of RE class, are required to study relevant literature or philosophical texts. A list of suggested texts can be provided by the school. In line with Edmund Rice Schools Trust Charter, [name of school] places great importance on the religious or spiritual formation of all its students. Each student has his own personal journey which will be encouraged and respected. Students who opt out of RE class will not be offered extra tuition or study periods.”

- CBS Thurles ⁵⁷
- St Aidan’s CBS Whitehall ⁵⁸
- Edmund Rice College Blanchardstown Dublin ⁵⁹
- Ard Scoil Ris Limerick ⁶⁰
- Kilkenny CBS ⁶¹
- Colaiste Choilm Swords ⁶²
- Mount Sion CBS Waterford ⁶³

[Update: These remain the same today, apart from Colaiste Choilm Swords no longer had an admission policy on its website when we last checked.](#)

4.3 Other approaches by secondary schools

In our first report, two of the 25 Catholic Second Level schools that we looked at do not propose requesting a meeting. These schools wrote:

“Arrangements are set out in the school’s policy on Non Participation in Religious Education as per the school website. This policy is available on the school website or by contacting the school office.”

- Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan ⁶⁴ (see footnote for more details)

“As it is religious education that is on the curriculum, all students are expected to attend these classes.”

- Eureka Secondary School, Kells, Meath ⁶⁵

[Update: These remain the same today.](#)

5. 25 Sample ETB Schools

In our first report, 19 of the 25 ETB second level schools that we looked at wrote as the substance of their arrangements:

“It is important to understand that our school does not provide ‘religious instruction’ and therefore the legal requirement to advise of the option to opt-out of religious instruction does not arise in this school. There is an important distinction between ‘religious instruction’ and ‘religious education’:

- Religious instruction is a term used in Ireland to indicate instruction in accordance with the rites, practices and teaching of a particular religion or denomination for pupils of that religious tradition.
- Religious education is open to all pupils regardless of their commitment to any particular religion or worldview. It seeks to contribute to the spiritual and moral development of all students equally.

As ETB schools are ‘multi-denominational’, [name of school] supports the provision of religious education that caters for all students regardless of their religious or non-religious beliefs.”

Update: This remains broadly the same today, with the exceptions detailed below.

In our first report, the other six ETB schools that we looked at did not refer to refer to Section 62.7(n).

Update: Five of these have now included sections similar to the 25 that did so in our first report.

5.1 ETB schools that refer only to the spurious RE/RI distinction

In our first report, 12 of the ETB schools wrote only the above statement about this supposed distinction:

- Skerries Community College, Dublin & Dun Laoghaire ETB ⁶⁶
- Ratoath Community College, Louth & Meath ETB ⁶⁷
- St. MacDara’s Tempelogue, Dublin & Dun Laoghaire ETB ⁶⁸
- Oaklands Community College, Laois & Offaly ETB ⁶⁹
- Greystones Community College, Kildare & Wicklow ETB - **has deleted this section** ⁷⁰
- St. Paul’s Community College, Waterford & Wexford ETB ⁷¹
- Beech Hill Community College, Cavan & Monaghan ETB ⁷²
- Killarney Community College, Kerry ETB - **has added a paragraph; see links below** ⁷³
- Naas Community College, Kildare and Wicklow ETB ⁷⁴
- Galway Community College, Galway & Roscommon ETB ⁷⁵
- St. Brogan’s College Bandon, Cork ETB ⁷⁶
- Blessington Community College, Kildare Wicklow ETB - **has deleted this section** ⁷⁷

Update: These remain the same today, apart from the three referred to above.

5.2 ETB schools that add extra information to this spurious distinction

In our first report, two of the ETB schools wrote the above statement, and added the following:

“Given that Religious Education, as distinct from Religious Instruction, is timetabled across our school at all levels the legal requirement to advise of the option to opt-out of religious instruction does not arise.”

- Gorey Community School, Waterford & Wexford ETB ⁷⁸ (Also added a preceding comment, see footnote)
- Tallaght Community School, Dublin & Dun Laoghaire ETB ⁷⁹

Update: These remain the same today.

In our first report, five of the ETB schools wrote the above statement, and added the following:

“...and therefore does not provide religious instruction in one particular religion or belief. However, as per Section 30(2)(e) of the Education Act (1998), [name of school] recognises the right of parents, or students over the age of 18, attending publicly-funded schools to withdraw from any subject contrary to their conscience, including religious education. Parents or students over the age of 18 who wish to opt-out of religious education must make a written submission to the principal in the first instance. The submission should outline reasons why the opt-out is being requested. The principal will then arrange to meet with the parent(s) or student over the age of 18 to discuss the request.”

In our first report, these five each ended differently, and they have now changed as follows:

“...If after that meeting the parent or student over the age of 18 still wishes to opt out of religious education, the school will facilitate this in the following way: Depending on the number of students choosing to opt out of religious education, a student may remain in the RE class and complete work which has been agreed between school and home. Students will not be permitted to do homework during this time.”

- Lusk Community College, Dublin & Dun Laoghaire ETB ⁸⁰

Update: This has now been dropped from this policy.

“...If after that meeting the parent or student over the age of 18 still wishes to opt out of religious education, the school will facilitate this in the best way possible in the school that does not create resourcing or financial implications for CDET or the DES. Please note, 62(7)(n) of the Education Act 1998, the school day cannot be shortened for the student as a result of opting out of religious instruction. If the number of students is small, the students will remain in the Religious Education classes and complete a cross-curricular ethics programme while wearing earphones to prevent them hearing the lesson. If the number of students is large, the school will endeavour to provide cross-curricular ethics classes in so far as its resources allow.”

- Larkin Community College, City of Dublin ETB ⁸¹

“...If after that meeting the parent or student over the age of 18 still wishes to opt out of religious education, the school will facilitate this. Through discussion, consultation and with consideration of available resources, Coachford College will make specific arrangements for the student. In accordance with S.62(7)(n) of the Education Act 1998, the school day shall not be shortened for the student as a result of opting out of religious instruction.”

- Coachford Community College, Cork ETB ⁸²

“If after that meeting the parent or student over the age of 18 still wishes to opt out of religious education, the school will facilitate this in the following way: Students opting out of religious education will be offered a Philosophy class.”

- Terence McSwiney Community College, Cork ETB ⁸³

Update: This now ends: “the school will facilitate this in the following way:...” but with the reference to philosophy class deleted.

“If after that meeting the parent or student over the age of 18 still wishes to opt out of religious education, the school will facilitate this in the following way: We allow any student who opts out of religious education to stay in the RE class and complete work which has been agreed between school and home excluding homework.”

- Ardgillan Community College Balbriggan, Dublin & Dun Laoghaire ETB ⁸⁴

Update: This has now been dropped from this policy.

5.3 ETB schools that did not refer to Section 62.7(n)

In our first report, in six ETB schools that we looked at, there was no mention in the Admission Policy of religion or Section 62.7(n) of the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018. These have now changed as follows:

- Carrigtwohill Community College, Cork ETB ⁸⁵

Update: This now includes the full section ending “If after that meeting the parent or student over the age of 18 still wishes to opt out of religious education, the school will facilitate this in the following way: the student will remain in the class and can study another subject at that time.”

- Castletroy Community College, Limerick & Clare ETB ⁸⁶

Update: This now includes the full section ending “A student who has formally opted out of Religious Education will be obliged to remain in the Religious Education classroom. They will be free to access and study any relevant schoolwork or coursework.”

- Castleisland Community College, Kerry ETB ⁸⁷

Update: This now includes the first part of the common statement.

- Roscommon Community College, Galway & Roscommon ETB ⁸⁸

Update: This remains the same.

- Inver Community College Carrickmacross, Cavan Monaghan ETB ⁸⁹

Update: This now includes the first part of the common statement.

- Kilkenny City Vocational School, Kilkenny & Carlow ETB ⁹⁰

Update: This now includes: “Kilkenny City Vocational School is a multi-denominational school and offers religious education to all students. If a parent has a query about their child’s participation in religious education/events, they should contact the principal.”

6. 10 Samples of Other Patron Bodies

6.1 Protestant Patrons

In our first report, five of the six Protestant schools that we looked at wrote: “A written request should be made, by the parents, to the Principal of the school. A meeting will then be arranged with the parent(s)/guardians of the student, to discuss how the request may be accommodated by the school.”

- Glenageary Killiney National School, Killiney ⁹¹
- All Saint’s National School Blackrock ⁹²
- Cloughjordan No.1 N.S, Tipperary ⁹³
- Old Borough National School, Swords ⁹⁴
- Midleton College, Cork ⁹⁵

Update: [These remain the same today.](#)

In our first report, another Protestant school wrote: “The school does not provide religious instruction. For any formal Church services which form part of the School Year, the student will be able to remain in the School, supervised by a member of staff subject to availability, on receipt of a written request in advance of the beginning of the School year by the parent (or the student if over 18) to that effect.”

- East Glendalough School, Wicklow ⁹⁶

Update: [This school no longer had an admission policy on its website when we last checked.](#)

6.2 Muslim Patrons

In our first report, we looked at one Muslim school.

“Pupils will remain in class under the supervision of the class teacher and complete independent learning activities assigned by their teacher.”

- North Dublin Muslim National School ⁹⁷

Update: [This remains the same today.](#)

6.3 Minister for Education is Patron

In our first report, we looked at three schools where the Minister for Education is patron.

Central Model School includes the following:

“The teachers in Central Model Senior School help Roman Catholic children in 2nd and 6th classes to prepare for sacraments in St. Mary’s Pro-Cathedral, Marlborough Street. All other children are taught Ethical Education based on the Learn Together programme taught in Educate Together schools.”

- Central Model School Dublin ⁹⁸

Athy Model School includes the following:

“A written request should be made to the Principal of the school. A meeting will then be arranged with the parent(s)/ guardians of the student, as the case may be, to discuss how the request may be accommodated by the school.”

- Athy Model School ⁹⁹

Note: Athy Model School also says that the School must satisfy itself that the Applicant Student is a member of a minority religion and that it provides a programme of religious instruction or religious education which is of the same religious ethos as, or a similar religious ethos to, the religious ethos of the minority religion of the Applicant Student.

It therefore says applicants must provide:

- a letter from the relevant religious leader confirming, that the Applicant Student is a member of the minority religion or
- the signature and stamp of the relevant Church leader on the application form confirming, that the Applicant Student is a member of the minority religion

Limerick Model School had nothing in the Admissions Policy regarding the right to not attend Religious Instruction under Section 62.7(n) of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018. However in their Religious Education Policy they say the following:

“Subject to the terms of the Admission Policy we enrol pupils of other faiths or no faith in the school and respect their beliefs and practices. Consultation with parents of these pupils takes place on enrolment. Each child is welcome to attend and benefit from the Catholic religious education programme. If parents have difficulty with this the Principal shall meet with them to see if an accommodation can be reached. Parents are welcome to view the Religious programme taught – at its core is the commandment ‘Love God and love your neighbour’.

Sensitivity will always be shown when pupils cannot participate in RE lessons/liturgical celebrations by allowing: Pupils to read/colour and do project work; Scheduling religion at different times in two adjoining classrooms Pupils to visit other classrooms during RE lessons/liturgical celebrations. The school cannot, however, formally undertake to educate children of other faiths in their own faith, but will facilitate parents/religious instructors if so requested..”

- Model School Limerick ¹⁰⁰

Update: These remain the same today.

7. Links to Sample School Admission Policies

- 1 <https://scoilcholmcill Newtown.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Admissions-Policy.pdf>
 - 2 https://www.tallanstownns.ie/_files/ugd/7f590e_7d4f1bc4c0904f68ab8c546081b15fc8.pdf
 - 3 https://attractas.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/1.-Admissions-Policy_20-June-2020.pdf
 - 4 <http://coolens.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Admissions-Policy-2021.pdf>
 - 5 <https://olgc.ie/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Admission-Policy-FINAL-30-6-2020.pdf>
 - 6 [http://www.ticknevinns.ie/St.%20Brigids%20NS%20Admissions%20Policy%20\(2021\).pdf](http://www.ticknevinns.ie/St.%20Brigids%20NS%20Admissions%20Policy%20(2021).pdf)
 - 7 http://www.scoilursula.com/uploads/8/9/3/9/8939523/admissions_policy.pdf
 - 8 <https://www.marysbns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/St.-Marys-Admission-Policy-2020-Approved-by-Patron-10-07-20.pdf>
 - 9 <http://www.killyonns.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Admissions-Policy-.pdf>
 - 10 <https://crehanans.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Final-admissions-policy-2021224384.pdf>
 - 11 <http://www.askeagns.com/Home.aspx> - current admission policy not on website
 - 12 <http://scoilmhuiremountsackville.ie/enrolments/>
 - 13 <https://www.scribd.com/document/459020925/admissions-policy-website>
 - 14 <http://gaelscoilliatroma.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Leagan-Béarla-den-Pholasa%C3%AD-lontrála.pdf>
 - 15 <http://holyfamilyns.ie/enrolment/>
 - 16 <https://stps.ie/enrolment/>
 - 17 <http://stjohnskennmare.ie/?p=7368>
 - 18 <http://www.murroens.ie/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Scoil-Mhuire-Murroe-Admissions-Policy-amended-for-Admission-to-Schools-Act-2018.pdf>
 - 19 http://www.ahanens.ie/sites/default/files/Admissions%20Policy%20Ahane%20National%20School%20September%202021_0.pdf
 - 20 <https://www.lisnagrins.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/ratified-signed-enrolment-policy.pdf>
 - 21 https://www.brureens.ie/index.cfm/_api/render/file?method=inline&fileID=8FF0EECE-7ABE-4C96-92CF22FE867B0E3F
 - 22 <https://silverminesns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Admissions-Policy-2020-15696B.pdf>
 - 23 <http://www.cillinliath.ie/claacuteruacutetechaacutainenrolment.html>
 - 24 <http://scoilbhridelannleire.ie/33766-2/>
 - 25 <http://www.gaelscoilnaduglaise.ie/contentfiles/Admissions%20Policy%202022.pdf>
 - 26 <https://www.stultansnavan.com/sites/default/files/images-docs/Admissions%20Policy%202020.pdf>
- St. Ultan's School is a co-educational special school for pupils with mild general learning disabilities. There are currently 110 pupils in the school between the ages of 4 and 18 years.
- 27 <http://www.glengoolens.ie/pages/for-parents.php>

- ²⁸ <https://www.durrowns.com/our-school/school-policies/admission-policy> at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jK7ZznM1COK-x5oOkYunvM6ak8jj4KIRRYDe77l-0NE/edit>
- ²⁹ <http://www.drinaghns.com/admissions-policy.html>
- ³⁰ <https://www.comanswoodprimary.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Enrolment-Policy-August-31st-2020-St.-Comans-Wood-Primary-School-Roscommon.pdf>
- ³¹ <http://www.gaelscoiluiriada.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/DRÉACHT-deireanach-PHOLASAÍ-GS-UÍ-RIADA-WILTON-19852J.pdf>
- ³² http://darrarans.ie/?page_id=1463
- ³³ <http://gaelscoilairséal.scoilnet.ie/blog/files/2011/05/Enrolment-Policy.pdf>
- ³⁴ <http://drimnaghcastleprimary.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Admission-Policy-of-Drimnagh-Castle-School.pdf>
- ³⁵ <https://www.stbrigidstpatricks.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/FINAL-Admissions-and-enrolment-policy-2022-and-ASD-class-policy-1.pdf>
- ³⁶ <http://www.mcauley-rice.com/images/Admissions-Policy-Bunscoil-McAuley-Rice.pdf>
- ³⁷ <http://stjosephssundaysgate.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/FINAL-Admissions-and-enrolment-draft-policy-2022-and-ASD-class-policy.pdf>
- ³⁸ <http://www.stoliversprimary.ie/files/Common-Application-and-Enrolment-Policy-2021.pdf>
- ³⁹ <https://presgnsdrogheda.scoilnet.ie/blog/policies/>
- ⁴⁰ <https://www.stbrigidstpatricks.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Common-Application-and-Enrolment-Policy.pdf>
- ⁴¹ <https://www.colaistebride.ie/uploads/1/0/7/6/10762948/admission-policy-coláiste-br%C3%ADde-september-2020.pdf>
- ⁴² https://salerno.ie/docs/Admissions_Policy_Aug_2020_1_.pdf
- ⁴³ <http://www.stmaryshfcglasnevin.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/St-Marys-Admissions-Policy-2020-DRAFT.pdf>
- ⁴⁴ <http://presentationsecondarylistowel.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/EK-Admissions-Policy-approved-18th-August-2020-1.pdf>
- ⁴⁵ <http://www.stmarysnewport.com/wp-content/uploads/0353-001.pdf>
- ⁴⁶ <http://www.patriciansecondary.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Patrician-Secondary-School-Admissions-Policy-1.pdf>
- ⁴⁷ <https://www.muckcrossparkcollege.com/index.php/academics/downloads/admission-policy-documents/432-admission-policy-may-21/file>
- ⁴⁸ <http://scoildara.ie/Portals/0/Website/School/Files/Policies/admissions%20policy%20September%202021.pdf?ver=2021-09-30-171556-423>
- ⁴⁹ <https://stpeterscollege.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/New-admissions-Policy-for-publication-Sept-2021.pdf>
- ⁵⁰ <https://www.ourladys.ie/Admissions/Admissions-Policy/>
- ⁵¹ <http://www.stmarysarklow.ie/Content/2022/5/oc50-AdmissionPolicy2021.pdf>
- ⁵² <https://www.newcross.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/New-Cross-College-Admissions-Policy-and-Admission-Note-2022-23.pdf>

⁵³ https://www.loretocavan.ie/images/Admissions_Policy_May_2022-23.pdf

⁵⁴ <https://hamiltonhighschool.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Admission-Policy.pdf>

⁵⁵ <https://loretowexford.com/administration/admission/>

⁵⁶ <https://presbray.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Admissions-Policy-September-2020.pdf>

Section 2 (Programmes) includes: “Religious Education is a core subject on the school curriculum and, as a Catholic school, it is expected that, with due regard to the rights of parents and students under the Constitution, students at Junior Cycle level in Presentation College, Bray are expected to study the timetabled DES Religious Education programme and to sit the State Examination Commission’s Junior Cycle Religious examination at the end of 3rd Year. The specification for this programme is set by the DES and focuses on developing knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values to enable young people to come to an understanding of religion and its relevance to life, relationships, society and the wider world. The course is built around three interconnecting strands: Expressing Beliefs, Exploring Questions and Living our Values. No alternative subject will be offered for tuition at these times. At post Junior Cycle level, students are expected to participate in a non-examination focused Religious Education framework devised by the school.

⁵⁷ <https://cbsthurles.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/CBS-Admission-Policy-202223.pdf>

⁵⁸ https://www.staidancbs.ie/Content/2022/9/la40-Admissions_Policy_23.24_3.pdf

⁵⁹ https://edmundricecollegedublin.ie/Content/2020/9/vj83-Admissions_Policy_2021_2022.pdf

⁶⁰ https://ardscoil.com/sites/default/files/2022-09/Admission_Policy_for_Ardscoil_Ris.pdf

⁶¹ https://dmaguire.site.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/7/9/12797985/cbs_kilkenny_admission_policy_from_august_22_2021.pdf

⁶² <https://colaistechoilmswords.ie/admissions/> - current admission policy not on website

⁶³ <https://www.mountsioncbssecondary.ie/Admissions/Admissions-Policy/>

⁶⁴ https://www.loretobalbriggan.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Admissions_Policy_BOM_8Sept2022.pdf

The website includes the following: “Despite this, we recognise that some parents/guardians may wish to withdraw their child from the Religious Education class, as is their constitutional right. The school has arranged that the allocated time on the timetable for Religious Education will be used by students of other faiths or none to study material relating to their own religious traditions or philosophical thinking, An NPRE student will be supervised in the Religious Education class. If a parent/guardian insists that their child is not present during a Religious Education class, then the supervision of the student will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian.”

<https://www.loretobalbriggan.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Non-Participation-in-Religious-Education.pdf>

⁶⁵ https://eurekastaffpolicydocuments.weebly.com/uploads/6/5/3/1/6531880/admissions_policy_september_2021.pdf

⁶⁶ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e60ae7f1832707e64a8194d/t/6166c8533abae1696ac12197/1634125909480/SCC+Admissions+FINAL+CE+Approved.pdf>

⁶⁷ https://www.ratoathcollege.ie/images/pdfs/Admissions/2022-23_Ratoath_College_admissions_policy_ratified_BOM.pdf

⁶⁸ <https://www.stmacdaras.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/St-Mac-Daras-Policy-for-Admission-to-School.pdf>

⁶⁹ <https://oaklandsccl.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Admissions-Policy-Oaklands-Community-College.pdf>

⁷⁰ http://greystonescollege.ie/Content/2022/9/kv38-Signed_Admissions_Policy_September_2022.pdf

⁷¹ https://www.stpaulswaterford.ie/Content/2021/11/xl84-pa50St_Pauls_Admissions_Policy_Ratified_by_BOM.pdf

⁷² https://www.bhc.ie/files/ugd/024943_03f17e46bf0f45b2b44924ad97cfa5ba.pdf

⁷³ https://www.killarneycc.ie/Content/2021/9/ot57-Admissions_Policy_of_Killarney_Community_College.pdf?33748

Killarney Community College has added this paragraph: “Killarney Community College offers religious education in all year groups as it promotes the holistic development of students and can contribute positively to their wellbeing in line with the principles of the NCCA Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle Frameworks. It facilitates the intellectual, social, emotional, spiritual, values and moral development of students and encourages respect for all members of our school communities. In addition, religious education supports the ‘multi-denominational’ aspect of our school’s ethos as it provides opportunities for students in engage with questions around their own religious or non-religious beliefs and those of their peers.”

⁷⁴ https://www.naascc.ie/Content/2022/2/fq26-Admissions_Policy_20222023.pdf

⁷⁵ http://galwaycc.ie/Content/2020/11/we81-Patron_Approved_Galway_Community_College_Admission_Policy_1.pdf

⁷⁶ <https://www.sbc.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Admissions-Policy-2022-23.pdf>

⁷⁷ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OQGMIkLmPzl6_J8qCoV6EoPKoFgwwJZK/view

⁷⁸ <https://www.goreycc.ie/GCS%20admissions%20policy%20including%20Special%20Class.pdf>

Gorey Community School preceded the above with the following statement: “Gorey Community School offers religious education in all year groups as it promotes the holistic development of students and can contribute positively to their wellbeing in line with the principles of the Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle Frameworks and in the spirit of the Deed of Trust. It facilitates the intellectual, social, emotional, spiritual values and moral development of students and encourages respect for all members of our school communities. In addition, religious education supports the ‘multi-denominational’ aspect of our school’s ethos as it provides opportunities for students to engage with questions around their own religious or non-religious beliefs and those of their peers.”

⁷⁹ <https://tallaghtcs.ie/page/Enrolment-2021/139413/Index.html>

⁸⁰ https://www.luskcommunitycollege.ie/uploads/1/3/8/9/138919081/fh23-lcc_admissions_policy_2022_23_publish.pdf

⁸¹ <https://www.larkincommunitycollege.ie/resources/Policies/Larkin%20Community%20College%20Admissions%20Policy%2022-06-20.pdf>

⁸² <http://coachfordcollege.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Admissions-Policy-2022-23.pdf>

⁸³ <http://tmscc.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/TMS-Admission-Policy-2022-23.pdf>

⁸⁴ <https://www.ardgillancc.ie/custom/public/files/ardgillan-college-policy-for-admission-to-school-year-2022-2023.pdf>

⁸⁵ <https://carrigtwohillcc.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Admission-Policy-wef-0921.pdf>

⁸⁶ https://www.castletroycollege.ie/Content/2020/10/xd81-Castetroy_College_Admissions_Policy_202122.pdf

⁸⁷ https://www.castleislandcc.com/Content/2021/9/qc60-Castleisland_CC_Admission_Policy_final1.pdf

⁸⁸ <https://roscomcol.com/admissions-policy/uncategorised/admissions-policy>

⁸⁹ https://www.invercollege.ie/files/ugd/024943_f32f49bedcfb49d9a4f7c21b67721a8e.pdf

- ⁹⁰ <http://kcv.s.ie/Content/2021/11/wl84-KCVS Admissions Policy 20212022 with ratification.pdf>
- ⁹¹ <http://gkns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/GKNS-Admissions-Policy-2023.pdf>
- ⁹² https://www.allsaintsnsblackrock.com/uploads/1/3/1/4/131402833/admissions_policy_all_saints_1_.pdf
- ⁹³ https://storage.googleapis.com/siteassetsswd/702/docletter/20220902021241_83_Cloughjordan-No.1-N.S.-Admission-Policy-2020.pdf
- ⁹⁴ <https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/old-borough-national-school/UploadedDocument/72b4fcb29f7a4c259673fd4509578a67/admission-policy-of-the-old-borough-school-2021.pdf>
- ⁹⁵ <https://www.midletoncollege.ie/userfiles/Admissions Policy 2023.pdf>
- ⁹⁶ <http://www.egs.ie/admissions/>
- ⁹⁷ http://www.ndmns.com/uploads/1/2/7/3/127348810/admissions_policy_2022-02.pdf
- ⁹⁸ https://www.centralmodelseniorschool.ie/files/ugd/5126fa_c48cc1b6b75c45b392b4a567468772eb.pdf
- ⁹⁹ <http://athymodelschool.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Admissions-Policy-Athy-Model-School-9.pdf>
- ¹⁰⁰ <https://www.modelschool.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/RE.pdf>