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## Special ASD Class Enrolment Policy

March 2020

## **1. Introduction**

This enrolment policy for our Special Class for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (hereafter referred to as ASD class) was devised by the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire and ratified in March 2020. It is written in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, 1998, the Education Welfare Act, 2000, the Disabilities Act, 2002 and other requirements as laid out by legislation and in circulars from the Department of Education & Skills (DES).

The ASD class will be established at the beginning of the 2020/2021 academic year and will be funded and resourced by the Department of Education and Skills.

This school policy has regard to the funding, resources, services and space available.

## **2. Aim and Objectives:**

- To provide an appropriate and high quality education to all children in the ASD class.
- To provide a broad curriculum which focuses on the abilities and strengths of each child while supporting their areas of need.
- To facilitate optimum levels of integration of children in the ASD class into mainstream classes and school activities, having regard for levels of disability, available resources and suitability for such integration.
- To enhance the communicative, social skills and school life of the children in the ASD class.

## **3. Enrolment Criteria**

The maximum class size is six pupils. Subject to sufficient places being available in the ASD class, the criteria for enrolment is outlined below. A child will only be deemed eligible for an offer of placement when **all** the following criteria have been met:

- The Enrolment Application Form provided by the school has been fully completed by the parent/guardians on behalf of the child.
- The Enrolment Application Form is accompanied by an original Birth Certificate or, if the birth certificate is unavailable, another acceptable proof of age such as a passport.
- A recent psychological or psychiatric assessment **or** a report from a multi-disciplinary team **must** be provided. A multi-disciplinary team consists of multiple professionals that may include: a Clinical Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech & Language Therapist, Social Worker and a Physiotherapist. Please note applications will only be accepted on the basis of

a psychological report with a primary diagnosis of Autism, provided by a qualified professional. A child must have a primary diagnosis of Autism/ Autistic Spectrum Disorder made using the DSM-IV or ICD 10 by a psychologist or psychiatrist **and** with a recommendation for ASD specific education/ special class within a mainstream school i.e. there must be a recommendation by a psychologist in the report that a special class placement in a mainstream school is suitable for the child.

- Any other professional reports about the child should be provided to the school for assessment by the Admissions Team. These will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will only be shared with professionals on a need to know basis and with the agreement of parent(s) / guardian(s).
- As inclusion is an integral part of our school ethos, it is intended that the enrolment that any child attending the ASD class would have the potential of (at least partially) integrating into a mainstream classroom setting. The level of integration, duration and timing will be decided upon by the teaching staff involved, parents of the child in question and on the basis of information shared at an annual review meeting.
- The parents of the child must accept and agree to the terms of the school's Code of Behaviour and other relevant policies.
- An Acceptance Form, as issued by the school, must be returned to the school within the required time period.
- Children **must** be 4 years old before **April 1<sup>st</sup>** in the year of enrolment.

#### **4. Enrolment Preference**

In the event that the number of applicants (after meeting all the criteria above) is greater than the number of available places, available places will be filled on review of Enrolment Applications received in the following order of priority:

- 1) Children who are currently enrolled in the school.
- 2) Siblings of children already enrolled in the school.
- 3) Children living in the school's catchment area (see main Enrolment Policy for details of the school's catchment area).
- 4) Children outside of the catchment area living in closest proximity to the school.

*In the event of two or more applicants, who meet all the criteria outlined above, being within the same preference category, preference will be afforded on the basis of age with the eldest applicant child being preferred.*

All unsuccessful applicants have a right of appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 within 42 days from the date of the decision by the Board of Management.

Please note that fulfilling the enrolment criteria does not ensure enrolment if sufficient places / resource are not available.

The school reserves the right to refuse enrolment/admission to any child where the child has special needs such that, even with additional resources available from the Department of Education & Skills and the HSE, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the child with an appropriate education.

*N.B. If the school does not receive the required documentation with the Enrolment Application form, the application will not be processed or considered by the school. It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/Guardian(s) to ensure that all supporting documentation is correct and is received by the school.*

## **5. Admissions Team**

Each application will be considered by the Admissions Team. The team will include the Principal, Deputy Principal and the Special Class Teacher(s). The Admissions Team can seek advice from a NEPS psychologist and other relevant professionals. A recommendation will be made by the Admissions Team in relation to each application to the Board of Management of the school. Decisions in relation to applications for enrolment are made by the Board of Management.

## **6. Procedure for Enrolment**

- Enrolment Applications for the 2020/2021 school year will be accepted from March 16<sup>th</sup> 2020.
- The closing date for the submission of enrolment applications is April 30<sup>th</sup> 2020.
- All applications received on, or before this date, will be acknowledged within one week of the closing day for the submission of applications. Receipt of acknowledgement of an enrolment application by the school does not constitute an offer of a place nor does it guarantee a place in the school. Decisions in relation to applications for enrolment are made by the Board of Management in accordance with this enrolment policy.
- Letters of offer for places in the ASD class will be sent in May 2020. The letter of offer includes an Acceptance Form which must be returned within one week of the letter of offer being issued by the school.
- Acceptance into the ASD class is contingent upon a signed acceptance of the school policies including the School Code of Behaviour in accordance with Section 24(4) of the Education Welfare Act, 2000. If the school does not receive the acceptance form with the required time period, the place will be offered to the next child on the waiting list for that school year.

- Applications for places in the ASD class received on, or after, May 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 cannot be considered for the new school year if the number of applications has already exceeded the number of available places.

## **7. Post-Acceptance**

Once a parent/guardian has accepted a place in the ASD class, the Principal will communicate with the parent/guardian as follows:

- The parents of a child being offered a place in the ASD class will be invited to visit the school to meet with the Special Class teacher and/or the Principal.
- Parents will be invited to attend an information evening before the end of June
- The parents **may** be requested by the school to consent to a visit by the staff to a child's preschool/school/home setting to observe the child.
- The parents/guardians will be invited on another occasion to come with their child to the class to meet with staff and see the classroom.
- The first year will be used to assess the child's individual needs, develop a School Support Plus Plan (often referred to as an Individual Education Plan or IEP) and assess whether the child's placement is appropriate.
- The plan will be updated on a regular basis by the staff. The SENO (Special Education Needs Officer) may also be made aware of the plan.
- It is important that every child gets the best possible start in the class. In order to achieve this, the duration of the child's day, or school starting date, may vary depending on the needs of the child.
- Parents of children in the ASD class will be expected to liaise with the HSE for essential services based on their needs e.g. Speech and Language or Occupational Therapy etc if they have not already done so.

## **8. Monitoring and Review**

The school reserves the right to review the child's progress from time to time whether during or after each year to determine whether this is indeed an appropriate school placement for the child.

Occasionally, concerns regarding the suitability of a child's continued attendance at the school or in the ASD class may arise. In such circumstances, a review of the school's ability to continue to meet the child's needs, safety, and the safety of others may be necessary. Any such review will be undertaken by a committee appointed by the Board of Management, in conjunction with the Principal and other relevant staff members. Parents/guardians will be kept informed of any concerns that might arise

in relation to their child's continued attendance at the school at the earliest opportunity.

Parents/guardians will also be given an opportunity to engage in the discussion surrounding the placement and concerns that arise from the case itself. In the event that it is determined that the child is not suitably placed in the school, having regard for the realistic service options available at the time, the Board of Management may request a multi-disciplinary team assessment be carried out to determine the best options for the specific child.

#### **9. General Discharge Policy**

Discharge may be recommended if the Admissions Team, after consultation with the parents/guardian, feel that the placement is not appropriate. Discharge from the ASD class may also happen if a child is fully integrated into mainstream school. All final decisions regarding discharge rest with the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire.

#### **10. Behaviour Review**

While some children with special educational needs may display difficult, defiant, or oppositional behaviours, all efforts will be made by the school to manage such behaviour using various strategies and through the implementation of the child's School Support Plus Plan (IEP).

All school pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, are subject to the School Code of Behaviour and Health and Safety Statement. Where a child's behaviour impacts in a negative way on the other children in the ASD class or another mainstream class to the extent that their constitutional right to an education is being interfered with as judged by the Board of Management of the School, the school reserves the right to advise parents that a more suitable setting should be found for their child.

#### **11. General Principles**

Taking into account the Department regulations and programmes, the rights of the patron as set out in the Education Act, and the funding available, the school supports the principles of:

- Inclusiveness, particularly with reference to the enrolment of children with a disability or other special need.
- Equality of access and participation in the school
- Parental choice in relation to enrolment.

- Respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and way of life in society.

The Board of Management will not refuse a child on the basis of ethnicity, disability, traveller status, refugee status, gender, cultural beliefs, political beliefs or family or social circumstances, provided they fulfil the enrolment criteria. Fulfilling the enrolment criteria does not necessarily ensure enrolment if:

- Necessary resources pertaining to the enrolment are not available.
- Sufficient classroom space is not available.
- The Admissions Team decides that the school is unable to adequately meet the needs of the child.
- The child is deemed by the Board of Management to be an unacceptable risk to themselves or to others.

Taking all of the above into account, and based on the advice of the Admissions Team, the Board of Management reserves the right of admission.

### **12. Evaluation & Review**

The Board of Management will monitor the implementation of all aspects of this policy. This policy will be amended and updated when necessary.

### **13. Ratification & Communication**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in March 2020.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management:



\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson, Board of Management



\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

Date: \_\_02/03/2020\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_02/03/2020\_\_\_\_\_