

Enrolment Policy for Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

**-Special Class
Scoil Mhuire
Abbeyside**

Introduction

The decision to provide a special class for children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) was taken by the Board of Management in 2016 and the SENO granted sanction on the 8th of November 2019.

Scoil Mhuire Abbeyside is a mainstream co-educational primary school with two class groups and caters for approximately 480 pupils in the Abbeyside area. It has a catholic ethos under the patronage of the Bishop of Waterford and Lismore.

The Special Class in Scoil Mhuire is a class for children with an ASD diagnosis (DSMIV DSMV or ICD10, as per DES guidelines), a recommendation for placement in an ASD class in a mainstream setting and who have the potential to integrate into the mainstream classroom. All placements are renewed annually in order to ensure that the placement continues to be appropriate for each child. The maximum class size is 6 pupils. Access to speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy etc will be dependent on local HSE services.

This policy is written in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, 1998, the Education Welfare Act, 2000, the Equal Status Act, 2000, the Disabilities Act, 2002, the Education of Persons with Special Needs Act, 2004 and other relevant legislation and circulars.

Aims

The aim of this special enrolment policy is to assist parents/guardians in relation to enrolment matters concerning our special classes that support children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Our ASD class(es) aim to offer an autism specific learning environment within a mainstream co-educational national school. This setting facilitates optimum inclusion in mainstream education as part of the school community where appropriate.

Enrolment Procedure

- The process of enrolling in our special classes supporting children with ASD begins with an enquiry to the school – this can be a telephone call, e-mail or a visit from the parents/guardians.
- The caller will be informed of the current enrolment status of these special classes and will also be directed to this enrolment policy on the school website.
- If an application proceeds, this Application (incorporating date of application, date of birth, address, telephone number and email address will be entered in the Expressions of Interest File.

- **Applications will only be considered on the basis of a diagnostic or psychological report – a diagnosis of autism meeting DSM IV/V or ICD 10 diagnostic criteria.** The application must include the following
 1. Documentation outlining a diagnosis of Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorder made using DSM-IV/V or ICD 10 by a psychologist, psychiatrist or team.
 2. Original birth certificate
 3. A written psychological assessment report dated within two years of the application being submitted. This must include a recommendation by the relevant professional that a special class placement in a mainstream school is both necessary and suitable for the child. In this regard it should be noted that the academic ability of the child will be taken into account when considering an application and will be the subject of continuous assessment and review. A full-Scale Intelligence Quotient score of 75 or greater when compared to children of a similar age will be used to determine this.
 4. The school application form, incorporating family details and medical history.

*Please note that **All** assessments/ reports must be included in the application for enrolment. Failure to do so will make the application invalid.*

- Where the school reasonably requires any further information, the application will not be treated as being complete until such time as all the requested information has been received. Enrolment cannot be deferred until such time as resources have been approved or allocated by the SENO or Department of Education and Science.
- The application will undergo team assessment by the Admissions Team to ensure that the application fulfils the enrolment criteria outlined in this policy. This will generally be done in May. The admission team is made up of the Principal, a Special Class teacher and one other member of the teaching staff. The admissions team may seek the advice of the school's allocated NEPS psychologist. Please note that applications must fulfil all criteria and that incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Once this process has been completed the applicant secures a place on the list of applicants to enrol. The organisation of this list is based on our enrolment criteria outlined below.
- When a place becomes available the parents and principal will complete the "Notification to NCSE of enrolment in a special class". This is Form 7 available on www.ncse.ie

Enrolment Criteria

A further reminder that enrolment to these classes will only be available to children with ASD who, with the supports available in Scoil Mhuire, will have the capacity to, at least, partially integrate into a mainstream class.

The maximum class size in each special class is six pupils. The Board of Management reserves the right to enrol less than this if it is deemed in the best interests of the class, the children and the school. If the number of children on the list of applicants to enrol exceeds the number of places available, the following criteria will apply in priority order, beginning with number one – subject to meeting all the criteria and completing all the procedures outlined in this policy

- **Category 1** Children with an ASD diagnosis currently enrolled in the school.

If the number of applicants in category 1 exceeds the number of available places, the Board reserves the right to determine the applicants to be enrolled. The following criteria will be considered:

1) Suitability for enrolment considering the needs/age/abilities of those currently enrolled and those seeking enrolment.

2) Length of time waiting for enrolment.

- **Category 2** Children with an ASD diagnosis with a sibling currently enrolled in the school.

If the number of applicants in category 2 exceeds the number of available places, the Board reserves the right to determine the applicants to be enrolled. The following criteria will be considered:

1) Suitability for enrolment considering the needs/age/abilities of those currently enrolled and those seeking enrolment.

2) Length of time waiting for enrolment.

- **Category 3** Children of current Staff with an ASD diagnosis

If the number of applicants in category 3 exceeds the number of available places, the Board reserves the right to determine the applicants to be enrolled. The following criteria will be considered:

1) Suitability for enrolment considering the needs/age/abilities of those currently enrolled and those seeking enrolment.

2) Length of time waiting for enrolment.

- **Category 4** Children with an ASD diagnosis living within the catchment area as outlined in our general enrolment policy.

If the number of applicants in category 4 exceeds the number of available places, the Board reserves the right to determine the applicants to be enrolled. The following criteria will be considered:

- 1) *Suitability for enrolment considering the needs/age/abilities of those currently enrolled and those seeking enrolment.*
- 2) *Length of time waiting for enrolment.*

- **Category 5** Children with an ASD diagnosis living outside the catchment area as outlined in our general enrolment policy.

If the number of applicants in category 5 exceeds the number of available places, the Board reserves the right to determine the applicants to be enrolled. The following criteria will be considered:

- 1) *Suitability for enrolment considering the needs/age/abilities of those currently enrolled and those seeking enrolment.*
- 2) *Length of time waiting for enrolment.*

- Every year after Easter, the school will write to all parents/guardians of applicants on the waiting list offering them an option to stay on the list.

Inclusion

The Board of Management will not refuse a child based on ethnicity, disability, traveller status, refugee status, 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 Admission Team decide that the school is unable to adequately meet the needs of the child. This may be the result of difficult, defiant or oppositional behaviour that impacts in a negative way on the other children in the class to the extent that their right to an education is being interfered with as judged by the Board of Management.

A review will take place at the end of each year to assess whether a child's placement is appropriate. This will be undertaken by staff with parental involvement.

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

End of Primary Schooling

It is school policy to facilitate the education of pupils up to thirteen years of age. Pupils who reach 13 after September 30th will be permitted to complete that academic year. This will mean a June finish for that child and the onus will be on parents to negotiate a placement with a suitable secondary school. Scoil Mhuire will assist with the transfer of records and relevant reports as necessary.

Right of Appeal

Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 provides a right of appeal against a decision to refuse enrolment. Any decision to refuse to enrol will be communicated by letter to the applicant by the Principal Teacher on behalf of the Board of Management. This letter will inform the applicant of their right to appeal the decision to the Department of Education and Skills (Section 29). The School Principal on behalf of the Board of Management will be responsible for preparing a response for the Appeals Committee when any appeal is initiated

Evaluation

This policy will be evaluated on an ongoing basis and will be adjusted accordingly where more clarity is needed.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____

Signed _____

(Chairperson)