



Enrolment Policy for AS Class

Enrolment Policy for our special class for children with autism.

January 2022

Background

Our special class for supporting children with autism was established in 2019. The decision to establish an ASD class in MNS was primarily taken by the Board of Management to meet the current needs within the cohort of pupils present in Moneytown NS at the time. This Policy was first written by the staff of Moneytown NS in April 2019 to outline the enrolment criteria and process for the AS Class on its establishment in September 2019. It was reviewed at an ISM meeting in January 2022.

This policy details the pupil profiles who meet the criteria for placement and who have the capacity to integrate into mainstream primary school. A maximum of 6 pupils can secure placement at any one time, depending on adequate funding and resourcing from the Department of Education and Skills.

Aims

In line with the ethos of Moneytown NS, the Board of Management aims provide an inclusive, supportive learning environment which helps each of our pupils reach their social, emotional and learning potential.

The purpose of this special class is to support children with autism, who are experiencing, or would experience, difficulty in a mainstream class setting, to access the curriculum and maximise their potential for learning and personal development. This class also serve to prepare children with autism to re-integrate into the mainstream school setting to access the curriculum in a meaningful manner.

Therefore, enrolment to these classes will only be available to children with autism who, with the supports available in Moneystown National School, will have the capacity to, at least, be partially included in a mainstream class.

All placements will be reviewed annually by the Special Education Admission's Team and Board of Management in consultation with relevant professionals and the designated SENO, to identify the most appropriate placement for each child.

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 the school's Admission Policy and Annual Admission Statement.
- If an application proceeds, this Application (incorporating date of application, date of birth, address, telephone number and email address will be entered in the Applications File. An original birth certificate must be supplied at this point.
- Applications will only be considered on the basis of a diagnostic or psychological report – a diagnosis of autism meeting DSM IV/V or ICD diagnostic criteria
- There must be a recommendation by a member of the Multi-Disciplinary Team in the report that a special class placement in a mainstream school is both necessary and suitable for the child. All reports in operation on a child should be provided to the school for assessment at this point.

- The parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child must accept and agree to the school’s Code of Behaviour and the terms of this policy.
- The application will undergo team assessment by the *Admission Team*, (The admission team is made up of the Principal, the Special Class teacher and one other member of the In-School Management Team) to ensure that the application fulfils the enrolment criteria outlined in this policy.
- Once this process has been completed the applicant secures a place on the list of applicants to enrol. This list is organised on the basis of 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
- An enrolment form, incorporating family details and medical history is now completed for children who have secured a place.

The function of the Special Education admissions teams is to:

- Ascertain how many places are to be filled in the ASD Class. The maximum number of pupils in the class will be 6 pupils.
- Review all applications and all documentation relevant to a child applying for a place in the ASD class
- Verify the class’s suitability in meeting the needs of the child
- Verify that there is a recommendation from a psychologist for placement in a special class in a mainstream school.
- Verify the suitability of the child for potential meaningful integration in an age appropriate mainstream class
- Verify that the child is 4 years old on or before May 1st on the year of enrolment in Junior Infants, as per general enrolment policy.
- Prioritise each qualifying applicant with reference to selection criteria as outlined below
- To make a recommendation of admission based on these findings to the Board of Management

The Board of Management is responsible for and must respect the rights of the existing school community and in particular the children already enrolled. The Board of Management has the right to endorse or overrule any decision made by the Special Education Admissions Team. In particular, The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse enrolment if they believe the school cannot meet the needs of a particular child.

Criteria for Enrolment in Classes for children with autism

A child will only be deemed eligible for an offer of placement when all the following criteria have been met:

“Enrolment in a special class should only be considered where it has been demonstrated that a student requires the support of a special class because he/she is unable to learn effectively in a mainstream class for most or all of the school day even with appropriate supports.” NCSE Guidelines, (2016, pg.2)

1. All children must be 4 years old before the 1st of May in the year in which they enrolled in Junior Infants.
2. Assessment and classification of autism or autistic spectrum disorder by a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist using DSM-IV or ICD-10 criteria OR multi-disciplinary assessment of same by a professional team (including a clinical psychologist, the assessment should be no older than 2 years).
3. An explicit recommendation of placement, by the relevant professionals in a report that a special class placement for children with autism in a mainstream school is both necessary and suitable for the child. This report must not be older than 2 years. In this regard it should be noted that the capacity of the child to integrate into mainstream will be taken into account when considering an application and will be subject to annual assessment and review.
4. A fully completed application form has been submitted by the parents/guardians to the school.

5. All applications received by the closing date will be considered by the Special Education Admissions Team. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered. The team will include the School Principal, Special Needs Coordinator, Special Class Teacher and member of the school's ISM. The Special Education Admissions Team may seek the advice of the school's allocated NEPS psychologist, SENO or other relevant professionals in processing applications.

Over Subscription of AS Class

The maximum class size in each special class is six pupils. If the number of children on the list of applicants to enrol, with a special class recommendation, 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)** Current pupils of the school with a recommendation to access Special class placements

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)** Siblings of current pupils of the school, living within the catchment area, with no current school placement

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 living within the traditional catchment area of Moneystown NS with no current school placement. (2 utility bills must be supplied for proof of address – electricity, gas, water, bin charges are acceptable).

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)** Siblings of pupils of the school living outside the catchment area, with no current school placement

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 living outside the catchment area with no current school placement

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.

Category 6) If spaces are still available, places will be allocated to pupils with current school placements wishing to transfer to Moneystown NS to access the AS class.

All unsuccessful qualifying applicants will be placed on the Placement List, in accordance with the above criteria for places that may become available. 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. The Placement List is valid for vacancies which occur in the current school year only. All applications will be reviewed with reference to the selection criteria in Term 2 each year.

Parents who are offered a place must complete and return our regular Enrolment Registration Form within 10 working days of the letter of offer to accept a placement. If the school does not receive the Registration Form within this period, the place will be offered to the next child on the Placement List for that school year.

Placement

1. After placement in the class a relevant Individual Education Plan will be provided for the child. This plan will have an input from all parties involved with the education of the child.

2. Each child in the ASD class will be assigned to an age appropriate mainstream class for inclusion purpose. Every opportunity will be used to promote meaningful inclusion in mainstream classes when the child is ready for this step and while having due regard for the educational benefit of all pupils enrolled in our school. Every opportunity will be used to promote inclusion in mainstream classes provided the child is ready for this step and has the necessary supports in place.

3. A review will take place at the end of the child's first year to assess whether the child's placement is appropriate.

- The review will be carried out by school staff with parental involvement
- The outcome of the review will be examined by the Board of Management
- If in the event that a placement is inappropriate, the school will liaise with appropriate agencies in an effort to obtain a more suitable placement

Pupils Transferring

Pupils may transfer to the ASD class during the school year subject to availability of places in both the ASD class and relevant mainstream class. Pupils transferring must enter the same class level that they are leaving, and have the necessary diagnosis and recommendations as outlined above.

Behaviour

It is accepted that 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 individual education plan. Where a child's behaviour impacts in a negative way on the other children in the 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. Parents/Guardians whose child(ren) have been refused enrolment may appeal the decision under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, by accessing the website of the Department of Education and Science.

Inclusion

The Board of Management will not refuse a child on the basis of ethnicity, disability, (i.e. severity of Autism diagnosis) 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

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

Health Board Input

Essential services are to be provided by the Health Service Executive. These services include Speech and Language therapy, Occupational therapy and Sensory activities.

Discharge Policy

It is school policy to facilitate the discharge of pupils from the special classes for children with autism once they have reached the age of twelve. Pupils who reach the age of twelve after September 30th in any year will be permitted to complete that academic year. This means a June discharge in the following year. Discharge may also be recommended after the first year if the admissions team, after consultation with the parents/guardian, feel that placement is not appropriate. Discharge from the special classes may also happen if a pupil is fully integrated into the mainstream school.

Evaluation

The Board of Management will monitor the implementation of all aspects of this policy. This policy will be reviewed in 2025.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Moneystown National School on:

Date: _____

John Byrne (Chairperson)

Anne – Marie Morris (Principal)