

ENROLMENT POLICY

ASD

The decision to provide special classes for children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Donabate/Portrane Educate Together National School was taken by the Board of Management of the school in conjunction with the Principal and Staff in February 2012. The decision was taken with a view to provide an education in a mainstream setting for children who have an Autism Spectrum Disorder and who fulfil the enrolment criteria. The decision was taken primarily to cater for children resident on the Donabate/Portrane peninsula. The Board of Management notes that it is open to any primary school to set up such a class and therefore does not see itself as providing a service for the entire North Fingal Area.

Our Mission

We aim to offer a positive meaningful educational experience, which allows the child to develop to his/her full learning potential in an environment that offers clarity, predictability and calm.

After a period of time observing, assessing and interacting with the child, an Individual Education Plan will be developed in consultation with parents and relevant professionals. This will be reviewed on an on going basis and will highlight priority-learning needs.

These needs will be targeted through the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum.

Our Aim

Our ASD classes aims to offer an autism specific learning environment within a mainstream co-educational national school. This setting facilitates optimum inclusion as part of the school community with access to mainstream activities as appropriate.

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:

1. 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).
2. An explicit recommendation of placement in a Special Class for children with Autism must be provided by a recognised professional (as stated in point 1), with the recommendation not older than 2 years.
3. A fully completed application form for enrolment has been submitted by the parents/guardians to the school.
4. The school **must have**, together with the appropriate clinical services, the **correct and necessary resources** in place to attend to the needs of the particular child.
5. The child must be 4 years on May 1st of the year of commencement in DPETNS.
6. The educational provision being provided to the children attending the special classes for autism in DPETNS will not be detrimentally effected by the level of special intervention required for the new child.
7. The Health and Safety of the staff and children of DPETNS will not be put at risk by the presence and behaviour of a child attending the special classes for autism at DPETNS.

Assessing applications

The Principal will meet with parents to discuss their child's strengths and needs. Parents would be fully informed re: this school, including the various workings of the mainstream and special class. Parents would also be informed of possible alternatives, such as special schools. Existing school, psychological, medical, speech/language, occupational therapy and other reports will be considered. Staff will arrange to observe the child in his/her pre-school or some other setting. The Principal may also (with parents' permission) consult with the professionals who prepared reports on the child and the professionals with whom the school has an existing relationship (such as our National Educational Psychological Service psychologist) before making a recommendation to parents regarding the perceived suitability, or otherwise, of enrolling the child in a special class.

Each application will be considered by the Admissions Team. The team will include the School Principal : Maeve Corish, the Senior Management Team, Susan Clarke, Micheál Garvey, Karen Coghlan and the Special Class Teachers (currently Lyndsy Healy and Sinead McDermott). A recommendation will be made in relation to each application to the Board of Management of the school. The B.O.M. has the right to endorse or overrule any decision made by the Admissions Team.

Where parents chose to proceed with the special class option, the principal shall make a report to the school's Board of Management, with whom the final decision on enrolment rests. (The principal may also recommend that the decision be deferred, pending the receipt of further information on the child.)

The school would also involve the family in planning for the child's enrolment, (e.g. a transition programme, identifying priority needs, special diets, alternative treatments, etc.)

Staffing

Each special class will have a maximum of six places. The special class will be staffed by a registered teacher and by special needs assistants (SNAs.) The teacher and SNAs will have experience of, or an interest in, working with children with Autism. The teacher will receive on-going specialist training through the Special Education Support Service (SESS,) as necessary.

Integration

It is hoped that the children entering our special classes would not require this provision for the duration of their primary school education. Integration in inclusive mainstream classroom environments, in so far as possible, is the Board's aim. Please see the school's Inclusion Policy.

The Board of Management's approach to integration is also framed by the Educate Together 'children of the school' model: i.e. 'the school is a collective organisation that strives to address the individual needs of every child. However, any school must balance these needs with the general interests of all the children.'

The nature of all integration shall be determined by the teaching staff, following reviews at appropriate intervals and consultation with the child's parents. Increasing (and full) integration will be put in place for children who are successful in the integrated setting. (There would be an expectation that the child is capable of meaningful learning and functioning within the setting.)

Partial integration will take the form of contact during specific situations or curriculum areas, where particular skills & interests and/or learning can be advanced: e.g. structured social play groups, music lessons, drama, school trips, maths lessons, Social Personal & Health Education (SPHE) lessons, visual arts, school assemblies, class or school celebrations, etc.

Support by Outside Agencies

Parents please note that a guarantee of support by outside agencies such as H.S.E. cannot be provided. Children who require speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, etc., will be dependent on the local H.S.E. services or Mater Child Guidance Clinic.

Allocation of Places

Each of the two classes has places for 6 children and will be supported by a teacher and a minimum of 2 Special Needs Assistants. Places in the class will be allocated as follows:

Places will be offered to children who meet the enrolment criteria in the following order:

- 1. Children already enrolled in the school.**
- 2. Siblings of children currently attending the school who started this school in Junior Infants.**
- 3. Children resident in the Donabate/Portrane Area.**
- 4. First come, first served.**

4.1 Fostered or adopted children

Fostered or adopted children will be placed on the pre-enrolment list in accordance with their birth date. Their place on the pre-enrolment list will depend on the time elapsed between placement of the child with the family and the enrolment date. For example, a child placed with the family at age two but placed on the enrolment list at age three will be treated as a child enrolled at age one. Confirmation from the relevant agency of the date of placement of a child with the family will need to be provided with the enrolment form. A pre-enrolment number will be provided which is relevant to the child's place on the list. It is the parents' responsibility to

inform the school of this information at pre-enrolment (not when offers are being made).

In considering applications from outside the Donabate/Portrane area, places will not be awarded to pupils where the enrolment of the child might interfere with a child from the area getting a placement for the following school year. Therefore account must always be taken of the waiting list from within the Donabate/Portrane area for the next school year.

Procedure for Enrolment

Once a parent / guardian has made an application to the school for a place in the A.S.D. class on behalf of a child, the Principal will undertake to communicate to the parent / guardian the decision of the Admissions Team and Board of Management within two calendar months of the application. The communication should be by letter.

1. The parents of a child being offered a place in the class will be invited to visit the school to meet with a member of the Special Ed. Team and the Principal of the School. Any information requested by the parents will be provided at this meeting
2. The parents may be requested by the school to consent to a visit by the staff to a child's pre-school/ school/home setting to observe the child.
3. 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.

4. 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.

5. The plan will be updated on a regular basis by staff.

6. Each child in the ASD class will be assigned to an age appropriate mainstream class for integration purposes where appropriate.

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. This Enrolment Policy will be reviewed annually.

The Board of Management reserves the right to alter this policy, subject to its statutory obligations, including its obligations to Educate Together as patron. Should this policy be altered, applicant parents will be advised in writing, and will be supplied with an amended policy. All alterations will come into effect 30 days after the date of notification.