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## Whole School Policy for Inclusion for children from the classes for children with autism.

### Table of Contents

- Introductory Statement
- Positive Language
- Rationale
- Vision
- Aims
- Content of the Plan
- Success Criteria
- Communication.

#### **Introductory Statement:**

This school policy for Inclusion was initially drafted by a volunteer team of parents, SNAs and teachers from DPETNS. Subsequent consultation with all staff members was facilitated during a staff meeting and via email after which time revisions were made as required.

#### **Positive Language**

We use the term 'class(es) for children with autism.' We do not use the term 'autism unit' (although this term may be used in some Department of Education & Skills and National Council for Special Education correspondence.) On a day-to-day basis, we refer to 'Lyndsy's class' or 'Sinéad's class' i.e. we use the current teacher's first name (as is the practice for classes throughout the school.)

#### **Rationale:**

This policy is a record of the steps we believe to be necessary in order to facilitate successful inclusion in mainstream classes for children enrolled in Lyndsy's or Sinéad's class. DPETNS endeavours to provide an inclusive environment for all of our learners, in line with our ethos as an Educate Together school. Having opened our first class for children with autism in 2012 we soon recognised the particular challenges that exist when facilitating meaningful

inclusion for the students enrolled in these classes. It is hoped that this policy will provide guidance and structure to all engaged in the process of inclusion within our school.

### **Vision:**

DPETNS recognises that “inclusion ideally promotes the same opportunities for education, rights and responsibilities for all, in a barrier-free system, where parents, pupils, and school staff collaborate and reflect the diverse nature of persons in a community” (The Report of the Task Force on Autism, 2001).

This policy will complement the inclusive ethos of our school. Inclusion may take many different forms from small group work within the classes for children with autism (reverse integration) to inclusion in the mainstream classrooms, or a mixture of both. This policy will lay out the specific steps which may be taken during the inclusion process.

### **Aims:**

We aim to:

- Make inclusion a positive and beneficial experience for all involved.
- Facilitate inclusion, if appropriate, for each child enrolled in Lyndsy and Sinéad’s classes at their own level ensuring a balance between inclusion that is both age-appropriate and also matches the child’s developmental level. Consideration will also be given to the pace of inclusion being mindful of social skills, behavioural and sensory sensitivities.
- Enable each child to learn alongside their peers, as much as is practicably possible.
- Aid smooth transition for children from Lyndsy and Sinéad’s classes to their respective mainstream classes.
- Outline inclusion procedures / practices in our school for children from Lyndsy’s and Sinéad’s classes who have been identified as ready for inclusion in the mainstream classroom.
- Evaluate and assess progress on a regular basis, modifying the inclusion process as appropriate.

### **Content of the Plan:**

#### Step 1: Pre-planning / Organisation

1. Each child enrolled in either Lyndsy’s or Sinéad’s class is allocated a mainstream class upon enrolment in the school.
2. Having familiarised themselves with the pupil’s needs and in consultation with parents, Lyndsy/Sinéad will identify when a pupil is ready to begin the process of inclusion in their mainstream class.
3. Lyndsy/Sinéad will identify and assemble an inclusion team for each child identified. A team will typically consist of the child, the mainstream class teacher, Lyndsy/Sinéad, SNA’s from both classrooms if appropriate, parent(s)/guardian(s) and may also include the principal or Learning Support Co-ordinator as well as other external supports as appropriate / available.

## Step 2: Planning

1. Appoint an inclusion co-ordinator from within the team (typically Lyndsy/Sinéad).  
The co-ordinator will:
  - a. Ensure all members are familiar with the policy and the steps it contains.
  - b. Share relevant information from the child's file with each team member.
  - c. Identify the strengths of the child and consider starting inclusion in line with these strengths.
  - d. Identify the specific needs of the child, including sensory and behavioural issues, which may need to be addressed prior to and during inclusion process.
2. Lyndsy/Sinéad and mainstream class teacher responsibilities
  - a. Arrange teacher observations – Mainstream teacher/SNA observing in class for children with autism and vice versa.
  - b. Consider beginning with reverse integration, where a small group of children from the mainstream class may join the child in the class for children with autism for a particular activity as a stepping stone, or in place of, inclusion in the busier mainstream class.
3. Lyndsy/Sinéad may prepare a social story for the target child if appropriate and may make practical suggestions for the mainstream teacher regarding how specific needs identified may be managed / accommodated for.
4. Mainstream teacher will ensure agreed arrangements/accommodations are in place prior to and during inclusion in the mainstream classroom.
5. Lyndsy/Sinéad will update child's Student Support Plus Plan (SSP plan) to reflect inclusion plans.

## Step 3: Fostering inclusive ethos among pupils from mainstream class.

1. Lyndsy/Sinéad or the mainstream teacher will deliver age appropriate peer training to the mainstream students prior to / during inclusion process.

## Step 4: Inclusion in action

1. Inclusion may begin with reverse integration, in which case Lyndsy/Sinéad, along with the SNA team will closely monitor these activities to ensure the needs of all involved are being met.
2. Some children may begin the process of inclusion in mainstream classes in place of reverse integration or following reverse integration. Inclusion in mainstream classes may be during social times such as reception time, lunch breaks, golden time and school outings or during times of curricular instruction. In each case the duration will be decided based on the strengths and needs of the child and the supports available. Support will be provided by an SNA (either from the team in the class for children with autism or from the mainstream class if available / appropriate) or a member of the Support Team. This support will be phased out on a very gradual basis in response to the needs of the child as assessed during the ongoing review process.

Similarly, the duration of inclusion sessions will be decided in response to the progress observed.

3. The supporting SNA / Support Team member/Class Teacher will keep a record of noteworthy observations in an Inclusion journal. Each child in Lyndsy/Sinead's class will have an Inclusion journal which will track their experiences in mainstream classes. The child, his/her parents/guardians and his/her teachers will also contribute to this ongoing review process as appropriate. Reflecting on the contributions to this journal will aid the planning process for the future.

#### | Step 5: Monitoring progress / facilitating transition

1. The inclusion process is monitored via the inclusion journal as outlined in step 4.
2. Transition to a new class level. In order for the child and the new staff members to build a working relationship the process of file sharing and observations outlined above will be repeated as early as is practically possible.

#### **Success Criteria:**

- Success will be determined by ongoing observations (Inclusion Journal) and supported by participant feedback (Teacher(s), Parents, SNAs and most importantly the student) sought by the co-ordinator on a termly basis.
- It is important to regularly review the process, to identify and acknowledge any mistakes or shortfalls, to learn from these and to implement new learnings. This review will be completed by the Senior Management Team as it is essential that the review is completed by people outside of the process.

#### **Communication:**

A hard copy of this policy is available on request from the school office. The vision for inclusion in DPETNS will be communicated to all parents during the welcome meeting for incoming Junior Infant parents and also during class acquaintance meetings each year.

This policy was ratified in September 2017 when Lyndsy and Sinéad were the teachers in the classes for children with autism. This policy will be renewed in the event of a new teacher being appointed to either class.