

Scoil Chormaic

COMMUNITY NATIONAL SCHOOL
SCOIL NÁISIÚNTA POBAIL



Castlemill, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin
Muileann an Chaisleáin, Baile Brigín, Co. BÁC

Admissions Policy
Special Needs Autistic Spectrum Disorder Class
Academic year 2018/2019

Introductory Statement

This policy has been drawn up by Principal Deirdre Corcoran following consultation with other CNS schools currently operating Special classes. It was then discussed at staff level and ratified by management and shared with DDLETB. This policy applies to all applicants to the Special Needs Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Class commencing in January 2019 for the remainder of the academic year 2018/19. This policy is subject to review on an annual basis. Scoil Chormaic Community National School operates within the regulations laid down by the Department of Education & Science and follows the primary school curriculum prescribed by the Department of Education and Skills which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with Sections 9 and 30 of the Education Act (1998). The on-going internal monitoring by the principal and staff will be supported by external evaluation by the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate. The principal and the chairperson of the Board of Management (BOM) will be happy to clarify any further matters arising from this policy.

Background

Scoil Chormaic Community National School is a co-educational Primary School which is under the patronage of DDLETB. Scoil Chormaic CNS is one of 14 Community National Schools in Ireland. The school aims to promote the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the child: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual. Scoil Chormaic CNS seeks to provide a high standard of education where each child is encouraged to reach his/her personal potential. The school is committed to a spirit of inclusion, equality and harmony where each child and member of the school community is valued and treated with respect. Scoil Chormaic CNS caters for children of all beliefs and none. It is the policy of Scoil Chormaic CNS to respect, celebrate and recognise diversity in all areas of human life.

Scoil Chormaic CNS opened in September 2010 with Junior Infant classes. Scoil Chormaic CNS aims to have a three-stream intake each year. The school is located in Stephenstown (off the Naul Road) and shares a site with a post-primary school. Scoil Chormaic CNS is a developing school and will cater for the full range of primary classes, from Junior Infants to Sixth Class, as the school grows. When completed, Scoil Chormaic CNS will have capacity to cater for up to 24 classes.

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In the course of the 2017/18 school year a board of management was established. The board of management is committed to the successful implementation of recent legislation, in particular the Education Act, 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Equal Status Act 2000. The board of management fully subscribes to the principles of partnership, accountability, transparency, inclusion and respect for diversity, parental choice and equality.

In view of the developing nature of the new patronage model and population change within the area served by the school, this admissions policy will be subject to regular review and possible change.

Rationale

This policy has been written in preparation for the opening of the first of two special classes in the school.

Provision within the special needs class

The school has a purpose-built special educational needs area which in time will cater for two Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) classes with a total of 12 children (6 pupils in each class), with the first class opening in January 2019. 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. It is envisaged that the children who attend the special classes would be suitable for integration into the mainstream school. The facilities include a sensory room, classrooms, multi-purpose central area and toilet facilities. Facilities are all purpose-built for our special needs classes and meet all criteria as set out by the Department of Education and Skills. The ASD special class will seek to provide the highest quality of education in collaboration with the external services the children are currently linked in with who provide multi-disciplinary support services such as Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Psychology and Social work.

Type of Special Needs Class

Following consultation with our Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO), it was decided that Scoil Chormaic CNS could best facilitate the needs of the community by opening a special class that would cater for children who have an ASD diagnosis by DES-approved professional assessment. In January 2019 Scoil Chormaic CNS will have one special needs class for pupils with a diagnosis of ASD. The children must have a recommendation that they should attend an ASD special

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needs class in a mainstream school setting. Thus, in January 2019 Scoil Chormaic CNS will operate one ASD class with an allocation of one teacher and two SNAs. The age range to be considered for enrolment is between 4 and 7 years of age - depending on whether a place becomes available.

Vision for our Special Needs CLASS

Scoil Chormaic CNS seeks at all times to provide a caring learning environment where each child is welcomed, respected, cherished and facilitated in reaching their full potential whatever their background, nationality or belief.

Our special needs class is an additional support mechanism for pupils with an autism diagnosis who fulfil the criteria for admission into the special class and who would find attending mainstream on a full-time basis challenging. Our special needs class is a class within the overall school and as such forms an integral part of the school community. As far as possible, pupils attending the special class will be integrated into the day-to-day activities of the school and it is envisaged that pupils attending the class will, as far as possible, participate in school-related events.

One of the aims of the special class is to integrate children with autism into the mainstream school community. Accordingly, pupils who attend the special class will be integrated into appropriate mainstream classes. The rate of this integration will be decided by the principal after consultation with the professional personnel assigned to the class and in consultation with the parents.

Our vision for our special needs class is that pupils attending will feel secure and happy in school. Our objectives are to give each pupil an individualised programme of work that focuses in on their strengths and difficulties in relation to communication and social skills within a structured and safe environment, thus enabling them to achieve their full potential and experience a happy and fulfilling school life.

Scoil Chormaic Community National School is a learning community where the holistic development of each child is paramount. We envisage that our special needs class will be a partnership between pupils, parents, staff and the various outside agencies that link in with the school and are working on behalf of the children. As such, Scoil Chormaic CNS seeks to ensure that all members of the school community work in partnership, having the best interest of pupils at heart and the overall development of the special needs class.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide a special needs class which is welcoming, holistic in its approach, child centred, reflective of current teaching and good practice in relation to pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Our special needs class seeks to create learning opportunities in a setting of diversity and inclusion. Our mission is for all pupils attending our special needs class to learn to their full potential in a caring, educational and safe environment.

Our Special class aims to:

- Remove/reduce a child's barriers to learning,
- Assist children to develop effective systems of communication and social interaction,
- Develop a child's ability to adapt to, and accommodate change,
- Encourage children to positively manage their own behaviour and difficulties,
- Provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets each child's needs, including access to the Primary School Curriculum, and other curricula for the provision of Special Educational Needs,
- Provide an environment that fosters care and monitors and provides interventions for pupils to enhance learning opportunities,
- Provide inclusive opportunities for children to integrate into mainstream as part of the continuum of education provision,
- Work in partnership with parents/carers and other professionals.

Ethos and Values of our special needs class

Scoil Chormaic CNS seeks to provide an environment within which pupils feel happy, safe and valued. A positive and supportive approach is adopted in addressing the unique and special needs of each of the pupils. Emphasis is placed upon building on the child's strengths, thus enabling progression in all aspects of his or her development. Close liaison with parents and relevant outside agencies affords the opportunity to address the needs of the "whole child." Shared aims and objectives between home and school provide the children with clear and consistent guidelines in terms of behavioural codes and the reinforcement of personal and social skills in a variety of settings.

Curriculum

Pupils attending our special needs class are encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-advocacy and self-discipline. The school plays an active role in promoting these qualities. Through direct intervention (and by adult example) pupils are encouraged to develop an awareness and respect for each other, the staff and their surroundings. Pupils are also encouraged to care for their own belongings and respect those of others, to foster appropriate and socially acceptable forms of behaviour and to take pride in their own strengths and achievements. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and, in the long term, develop a sense of self-discipline. In achieving this aim, each pupil is supported in developing individual strategies and responses to calmly diffuse or manage potentially difficult situations. From a staff perspective emphasis is placed upon recognising and rewarding positive behaviour.

Individual educational plans and behavioural plans will be put in place for each pupil. These will be drawn up in consultation with parents and the relevant outside agencies. In order for the teacher to develop individualised educational plans, a period of observation and baseline assessment will be necessary. All behaviour management programmes are discussed with parents and appropriate strategies, which can be followed both at home and in school, are developed. Pupils generally respond well to the structured environment of the school and it is our aim to manage or modify difficult behaviours. Parents are encouraged to approach the school if they wish to discuss a particular problem. Pupils attending the special class are treated with dignity and respect and are encouraged to make their own decisions and choices and share ideas and opinions wherever possible.

Code of Behaviour

In keeping with the NEWB guidelines, the school will draw up a code of behaviour for the special class, in consultation with staff, parents and board of management. In the interim, the current school code of behaviour will apply. Included in this code of behaviour will be the possibility, in certain extreme cases that a pupil may be temporarily suspended from school or permanently excluded should their behaviour put the safety and welfare of other pupils and staff members at risk. All reasonable steps to reduce or prevent such extreme behaviour would be taken prior to considering suspension or expulsion.

Staff Professional Development

Scoil Chormaic CNS will be proactive in meeting the continuing professional development needs of their special class teacher and special needs assistants. The Special Education Support Service (SESS) and the Middletown Centre for Autism are two such professional development providers.

Meeting with Parents* and Children

Meetings may be held with parents and children seeking admission to the special needs class to discuss the individual needs of the child. Permission will be sought from the parents to visit the child's pre-school placement (where relevant) or current placement with a view to speaking to staff members about the child's needs academic/social development and capabilities. Consultation will also occur with the professionals who wrote the most up-to-date reports for each child. If it is considered from these meetings and conversations that the school can successfully address the child's needs (and the child is capable of meaningful integration both in the unit and in mainstream classroom) then the child and family will be invited to the school on a number of occasions to become accustomed to the school and meet with staff. The purpose of these meetings and conversations is:

- To inform the decision as to whether or not the special needs unit in Scoil Chormaic CNS is an appropriate placement for the child,
- To facilitate the smooth transition into school if accepted.

Should a pupil who is currently attending the ASD class leave the school or should a pupil who is attending one of our classes be ready to integrate fully into mainstream places may become available.

Initially any new pupil attending the special class will attend on a phased-in basis and on a reduced day. The organisation of this phased approach will be at the discretion of the principal in consultation with the staff. This is to help children settle into their new environment and familiarise themselves with their surroundings and the other pupils and staff members. It is very important that we try to ensure this initial settling in period will be a positive experience for all involved.

**The term 'parent' in this guideline should be taken to include parents and guardians of pupils.*

Registration Procedure for Special Class

Criteria for Admission

1. Each child must have a diagnosis of Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorder using the DSM V or ICD 11 criteria as set out by a professional/individual approved by the Department of Education and Skills and a Multi-Disciplinary assessment report. This report must be current (within the last 12 months).
2. A recommendation that a special class placement within a mainstream school is best suited to the child's needs must be clearly stated in the child's psychological assessment.
3. As inclusion is an integral part of our school ethos, it is a necessary criteria of enrolment that any child attending the special class must have the potential of meaningful integration into a mainstream classroom setting. Thus, their level of autism mustn't prevent the child from interacting appropriately and integrating into mainstream. Furthermore the child's cognitive level must allow him/her to integrate academically and socially in the mainstream school setting as well as the ASD class. The level of integration, duration and timing will be decided upon by the principal and staff of the special class in consultation with the mainstream teacher, parents of the child in question and on the basis of information shared at an annual review meeting.
4. A fully completed *Expression of Interest* form must be filled in by the parents and any relevant reports must be submitted to the school. The completion of an *Expression of Interest* form does not constitute an offer of a place.
5. The child must be at least 4 years of age on or before the 30th April prior to starting school.

In the event that the number of children that meet the above criteria (1-5) is greater than the number of places available, the following categories shall be used as a basis for prioritising children. Prioritisation will follow the sequence indicated in the additional criteria (A and B) below.

Additional Criteria A:

1. Children with an ASD diagnosis currently enrolled in the school with a recommendation that a special class placement within a mainstream school

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is best suited to the child's needs. (This must be clearly stated in the child's psychological assessment.)

2. Priority is given to brothers and sisters of children currently attending Scoil Chormaic CNS (including step-siblings, resident at the same address).
3. Suitability for admission considering the needs/age/abilities of those currently enrolled and those seeking admission.
4. Children living in the catchment area of Balbriggan.

Then

Additional Criteria B:

5. Children living outside the catchment area of Balbriggan unless the area in which they live is within the catchment area of another mainstream school which has vacancies in their special needs class(es).

Unsuccessful Applications

In the event of the number of applicants exceeding the number of places all unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing by post.

- All unsuccessful applicants have a right of appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998.
- Should a vacancy in the special class arise in the future all unsuccessful applicants will be invited to re-apply for a place in the special class should places arise.
- Registration alone does not guarantee a place in the school. Decisions in relation to applications for enrolment are made by the school in accordance with the admissions policy.

Registration Procedure for our special needs class for January, 2019

Registration for the 2018/2019 school year: Closing date for places is 20th December 2018. All applications for places received will be responded to within 21 school days of the closing day for the submission of applications.

Requests for enrolment forms should be made to:

Special Class Admissions,

Scoil Chormaic CNS,

Stephenstown,

Balbriggan,

County Dublin.

Telephone: (01) 8416948

It is the duty of parent/guardians to ensure that with the application form the school has **all** of the following:

A. An original long form Birth Certificate (together with a photocopy).

B. **Two** of the following as proof of address (these must be dated within two months of application):

- Electricity Bill
- Gas Bill
- Landline Telephone Bill
- Waste collection bill
- Lease Agreement

C. A diagnosis from a psychiatrist, psychologist, or a multi-disciplinary team that has assessed and classified the applicant as having autism or autistic spectrum disorder according to DSM-V or ICD 11 criteria.

D. Applicants may be required to provide documentation in relation to previous unsuccessful special class applications.

N.B. If the school does not receive this documentation with the *Expression of Interest* form the application will not be processed.

Return of Forms of Acceptance

Letters of offer for places in the special class for children with an autism diagnosis will be sent by post to the address provide on *Expression of Interest* forms upon confirmation of a vacancy. Acceptance forms must be returned within 10 school days of the letter of offer. If the school does not receive the acceptance form the place will be offered to another applicant.

Equality of access

No child will be refused admission for reasons of religion, language, gender, social status, ethnicity or political beliefs and values. However, all children attending the special class must have the potential to integrate into the mainstream setting. It is also a criteria that the special needs class is capable of meeting the child's individual needs in a meaningful way.

Discharge Policy

It is school policy to facilitate the discharge of pupils from the special class for children with ASD once they have reached the age of twelve. Pupils who reach the age of 12 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 amended and updated as required.

This policy is subject to regular review by the Board of Management.

Signed: Gráinne Maguire

Gráinne Maguire,
Chairperson Board of Management

Date: 13/12/2018