

St. Kevin's G.N.S.

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Enrolment Policy for ASD Class in St. Kevin's G.N.S.

The Board of Management of St. Kevin's G.N.S. has set out this policy in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act of 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000 and the Disabilities Act 2002.

St. Kevin's G.N.S is a mainstream, vertical, all-girls primary school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin.

The ASD Unit will be funded and resourced by the Department of Education and Science, with additional financial support from Board of Management Resources. This school policy has regard to the enrolment, funding, resourcing, general operation, services and space available in the unit.

The ASD class at St. Kevin's G.N.S. is a class for girls with ASD who have been recommended for placement in an ASD class in a mainstream primary school and who have the potential to integrate into a mainstream, age appropriate class. All placements will be reviewed annually to ensure that the placement continues to be appropriate for each child. The maximum class size is six pupils. Access to speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy etc. will be dependent on local H.S.E. services or services provided by another agency serving the child's needs.

Our Aims

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

Our ASD class will aim to offer an autism specific learning environment within a mainstream national school. This setting facilitates optimum inclusion in mainstream education as part of the school community as appropriate having regard for levels of disability, resources and suitability for such inclusion.

We wish to provide a broad curriculum which focuses on the abilities and strengths of each child while supporting their areas of need.

We aim to enhance the communicative and social skills of the children in the class.

Current position.

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The Board of Management of St. Kevin's Girls' School agreed to the opening of a unit following extensive consultation with the school staff, the Board of Management and with Ruth McKernan, SENO, NCSE.

The decision was taken with a view to provide education in a mainstream setting for children who have an Autistic Spectrum Disorder and who fulfil the enrolment criteria laid down by the Department of Education. The decision was taken primarily to cater for children resident in the parish of Kilnamanagh-Castleview; siblings of current and past pupils; and pupils attending ABACAS special school where there was a recommendation that the child be transferred to an ASD class within a mainstream school.

The proposed opening date is during the first term of the school year 2020/2021. The school received the official letter of sanction from the NCSE in April 2020.

Enrolment.

On ratification of this policy applications will be accepted for placement in the ASD Class. On ratification what the Board is defining as the 'establishment phase' begins. This phase is designed to allow a controlled opening of the newly established class, giving priority to children with an existing connection to our school.

Applications will be accepted, and considered, on behalf of children with an ASD diagnosis meeting DSM IV/5 or ICD diagnostic criteria.

During the 'establishment phase' applications will be prioritised and actioned as follows –

1. Applications from children currently attending the school who have an ASD diagnosis, who are unable to consistently access the curriculum in a mainstream classroom setting.
2. Applications from children who applied to the school for a place in Junior Infants in September 2020, who have an ASD diagnosis.
3. Applications from children who are currently attending ABACAS Special School who have an ASD diagnosis and who, in the opinion of the Principal of that school would be suitably placed in an ASD unit.
4. Applications from children who currently have a sibling attending this school who have an ASD diagnosis.
5. Applications from children who currently have a sibling attending St. Kevin's BNS who have an ASD diagnosis.
6. Applications from children whose parent is a staff member of St. Kevin's Girls' School.
7. Applications from children whose parent is a staff member of St. Kevin's B.N.S.
8. Applications from children living in the parish of Kilnamanagh-Castleview who have an ASD diagnosis.
9. Application from any other children who may apply.

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Parents/guardians of children in categories 1 to 5 above who wish to apply for a place in the ASD Unit should apply to the school for a place using the ASD class Standard Application Form (NCSE Form 7) as early as possible, but in any event on or before Friday 14th June 2020.

Parents/guardians of children in categories 6 to 9 above who wish to apply for a place in the ASD class should apply to the school for a place using the ASD class Standard Application Form (NCSE Form 7) as soon as possible after June 1st, although these applications will not be processed until after June 14th.

Given that this is a new situation for our school –

1. Applicants from categories 1 to 3 above – who make valid application before June 14th will have their applications submitted to the SENO as soon as the required psychological reports are made available to the school.
2. Applicants from category 4 and 5 above – who make valid application before June 14th will have their applications submitted to the SENO immediately after June 14th, once there are places available for those applicants – in other words unless there are six applications from categories 1 to 3 as above. In the event of there being fewer spaces than applications priority will be given to category 4 over category 5, and to older children within each category.
3. Parents/guardians from categories 1 to 5 above who apply before June 14th as above, will have until September 9th, 2020 to provide any additional reports/certification as required if their initial application is deemed short of the requirements for entry into the unit by either the school principal in consultation with the school SET team, or our assigned SENO. Once the relevant paperwork is received by the school the application will be forwarded to the SENO.
4. Once applications submitted to the SENO are approved the child will be deemed to be accepted into the unit. In that sense places from children in categories 1 to 3 will be allocated on a first come first served basis.
5. In an event where the number of allocated places in the unit is less than the number of applicants for those places, then priority will be given to the older children within a particular category. This does not affect the overall priority of categories, with the higher category children (Cat 1 being the highest) being allocated places first in line with this policy once their applications are received in line with the application deadlines as defined.
6. Where approval for placement in the unit is not received from the SENO a place will be held in the unit until October 25th, 2020, for any child who originally applied before June 12th, and on whose behalf an application was submitted to the SENO before September 10th – this is to allow time for decision making by the NCSE, and potential appeals on the child's behalf. This October 25th deadline may be extended by the Board of Management but only in exceptional cases where there is a probability that placement is suitable for the child but required documentation is awaited.

The first stage of the 'establishment phase' will end on June 12th. Immediately after this date the Board of Management will establish how many of the six places in the unit have been allocated to pupils or are

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likely to be allocated from the initial applications. The Board will consider both places approved by the SENO, and any places held to allow for the completion of the approval process by the NCSE.

At this point the Board will consider the capacity of the unit to cater for the number of children enrolled.

The Board anticipates a potential four or five pupils will have been approved for placement / or will be in the process of seeking approval for placement in the class at this time.

Given the newness of the situation the Board anticipates that this number of pupils will constitute a stretch to the resources of the school and will defer further expansion until September 2021.

If approved pupil numbers stand at three or fewer then the board will consider applications made on behalf of children from categories six to nine above, with a view to bringing total enrolment at opening up to four pupils.

Each application will be considered in the light of the following factors

1. The pupil's age.
2. The pupil's school history.
3. The impact of ASD on the child's communication skills and behaviour as outlined by his reports and/or reports from his current educational setting. This impact is evaluated to assess the likely potential for mainstream class integration.
4. The distance from the school to the pupil's home address.

Using these factors as a guide the school Principal in consultation with the school's SET team will propose to the Board of Management that a place(s) be offered to the pupil(s) who would best match the profile of the existing class members in terms of forming meaningful instructional groups.

The Board anticipates that, depending on how the above scenarios impact, there will be either one or two places to be filled in September 2021.

Priority for these place(s) will be given to pupils from Categories one to eight as listed on page 2 above, and who apply for a place in Junior Infants 2021, according to the timetable outlined in the school's main enrolment policy. For 2021 enrolment this means that application is made during the ten-day period from the 4th to the 15th of November 2020.

If no children from these categories are eligible for placement in the Unit applications for children of an age for older classes may be considered, as will places for children from outside the above categories.

This Policy will be reviewed in September 2021 with a view to establishing enrolment criteria to deal with the ASD class after the opening of the class.

Other Enrolment factors.

The Enrolment Application (NCSE Form 7, Notification to NCSE of Enrolment in Special School/Special Class) must be fully completed and accompanied by all the following supporting documentation supplied by parents/guardians

- The child must have a diagnosis of Autism / Autistic Spectrum Disorder made using the DSM-IV/V or ICD 10 by the psychologist or team.

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- A written psychological assessment /report (dated within the two years prior to the application being submitted) or a written report from a multi-disciplinary team must be provided. A multi-disciplinary team may consist of a Clinical Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech & Language Therapist, Social Worker and a Physiotherapist. Please note all reports in operation on a child should be provided to the school for assessment by the Principal and SET team.
- There must be a recommendation by the relevant professionals in the report that a special class placement in a mainstream school is both necessary and suitable for the child.
- Proof of address.
- Original birth certificate.

Where a child is already in an educational setting, a visit may be arranged to that setting to observe the child and to discuss the child's needs with the staff.

In exceptional cases the school reserves the right to refuse enrolment. Such an exceptional circumstance could arise where:

- The pupil has special needs such that, even with additional resources made available by the Department of Education and Skills, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the pupil with an appropriate education.
- In the opinion of the Board of Management, the pupil poses an unacceptable risk to other pupils, to school staff or to school property.
- All placements in the ASD unit will be subject to review at the request of the parents/guardians and/or the school. The review will include input from the parents/guardians, the school and all relevant outside agencies working with the child. A review will generally take place annually towards the end of the school year

Set-up and Year 1 factors.

The Board of management is very aware that the ASD class will provide many challenges during year one. The Board is committed to supporting staff and pupils through this stage. The support of parents/guardians will be a vital ingredient in the success of the unit and their flexibility in easing the children into full school routines will be important.

The first year will be used to

- Assess the child's educational needs
- Develop an I.E.P. to address identified needs
- Assess whether the child's placement is appropriate

Discharge Policy

It is school policy to facilitate the discharge of pupils from the unit 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 unit may also happen if a pupil is fully integrated into the mainstream school.

Integration into Mainstream setting.

Integration will be determined based on the individual needs of the child, and through discussion with the parents/guardians and the relevant class/support teachers. Following agreement phased integration will take place as appropriate.

Moving on from the ASD Class.

Our ASD class runs parallel to the mainstream school. This means that each child can spend up to eight years in the ASD class.

Discharge from the unit will happen if the child is fully integrated into a class within the mainstream school; or if the Board of Management deem that the placement is no longer appropriate; or when the child has completed the eight-year primary school cycle; or in the June following the child's twelfth birthday.

As each child progresses parents should consider the post-primary options available. It is the responsibility of the parents to negotiate the placement of their child in a post primary setting, however St. Kevin's G.N.S. will facilitate all transfer of records/reports as well as assisting with any information required regarding the child.

Overall Aim

The aim of our ASD class is to provide opportunities for children with Autism to access the curriculum in a supported environment. We aim to differentiate for all our children through a complete individualised approach incorporating a variety of strategies, assessments and methodologies. The overall aim is that children are integrated into mainstream classes as fully as possible according to their needs.

Strategies and Methodologies to be considered

(not an exhaustive list)

- TEACCH - the classroom environment, organisation, structure, teaching methodologies and daily routine are based on this strategy.
- Lámh- where signs are used as a form of communication
- DIR Floortime and Intensive Interaction where appropriate
- Multi-sensory room.

Please note: All strategies used must be used in conjunction with an individualised approach. Best practice may see a variety of the above strategies and more being used rather than a major focus on any one of the above independently.

Multi-Sensory Room

The school contains a multi-sensory room, which is used mainly by children in our integrated classes. The multi-sensory room is a therapy room that uses light and sound to help children with sensory needs. Special Needs Assistants are most likely to be the staff members who will be using this room with children.

Integration and Reverse Integration

It is our aim and our hope that all children within the unit will integrate successfully either full-time or part-time into mainstream during their primary education experience at our school. However at all times we aim to provide the most inclusive form of education for our children.

Mainstream integration:

- Most students can avail of the opportunity to integrate into a mainstream class for a least one lesson a day. This is child dependent and the amount of time they spend in mainstream must reflect their level of comfort, social ability and learning ability within a mainstream setting.
- An SNA and/or Class Teacher may attend these classes with the student(s) where applicable.
- All children must be differentiated for and this level of differentiation must reflect the strategies and methodologies used by the integrated class teacher.
- The child / children become an integral part of the class sitting amongst the other students and participating in all activities to the best of their ability.
- Assessment within the mainstream class both non-academic and curricular will be completed or followed up by the integrated class teacher in conjunction with the SNAs and mainstream teacher.

Reverse integration:

Reverse integration happens when children from other classes join with children in the integrated classes for lessons.

Full-time Integration:

If a student is beginning the process of full-time mainstream integration the following procedure should be followed. This is a gradual process of integration and should be done over a period.

The NEPS psychologist may be asked to provide advice and support around issues of integration before the plan for mainstream integration, parents/guardians will be invited in to discuss the process

Absences

If a teacher in an ASD Class is absent, their class is not split. Usually, a learning-support teacher or another teacher will provide cover for the day and a substitute is employed for her LSRT class. In exceptional circumstances, a mainstream class teacher may be asked to cover in the ASD Class while their own class is split for the day.

Staffing

All staffing arrangements are the responsibility of the Principal. However, the Principal will consult with staff members each year to establish the most appropriate roles. In certain cases, a mainstream class teacher and an integrated class teacher might swap classes for a block of lessons or period of time as agreed between the teachers.

Evaluation

The Board of Management will monitor the implementation of all aspects of this policy. This policy will be amended and updated as required.

Designated Autism Class

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This policy was adopted and ratified by the Board of Management of St. Kevin's G.N.S. at its meeting held on 29th April 2020

Date: _____ 29th April 2020 _____

Signed: _____ Marie Sealy _____

Chairperson, Board of Management.