

# **Broadford & Kilbane N.S.**

## **Admissions and Enrolment Policy for Autism Unit**

The Board of Management of Broadford & Kilbane 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. The Board trusts that by so doing, parents will be assisted in relation to enrolment, and that furthermore, the chairperson of the Board and the Principal Teacher will be happy to clarify any further matters arising from the policy.

The special Autism Unit was established in 2008 and resourced by the Department of Education and Science. This school policy has regard to the funding, resources, services and space available.

### **Aim and Objectives**

- To provide a quality driven, appropriate educational service to all children in the Unit, within the requirements of all recent legislation pertaining to Special Needs Education
- To strive towards the integration of children in the Unit into mainstream education, having regard for levels of disability, available resources and suitability for such integration
- To enhance the communicative and social skills of the children in the Unit

### **Enrolment Procedure**

The registration process begins with a referral from the Autism Team, i.e. clinical psychologist or/and SENO, a telephone call or a visit from the parents. Applications, incorporating date of application, date of birth, address and telephone number are entered in the Applications book. Applications will only be processed on the basis of a diagnostic or psychological report. Once this process has been completed the applicant secures a place on the list of applicants to enrol. A school application form, incorporating family details and medical history is completed on enrolment day for children who have secured a place. Parents will be notified within 8 school weeks of the decision of the board with regard to acceptance/or otherwise of enrolment.

### **Enrolment Criteria**

A definite diagnosis of Autism must be provided by a Clinical Psychologist or by a Multi-Disciplinary Team and a recommendation that the child would benefit from a placement in a special class attached to a mainstream school must also exist. The maximum class size is six pupils. Should the number of children on the list of applicants to enrol exceed the number of places available a waiting list will be established. Places will be offered based on the following criteria which will apply in priority order, beginning with number one.

1. Students currently enrolled in the School
2. Brothers and sisters of existing pupils
3. Children living within the parish (Broadford, Kilbane and Kilmore)
4. Children of current school staff
5. Suitability of placement-Principal and Special Ed. Team will undertake an in-depth evaluation of the children on the waiting list. The child who displays the greatest capacity and ability for successful integration will be offered a place in the ASD Class. These evaluations will take the form of observation check-lists, psychological reports, multi-disciplinary team reports and/or interviews of previous school teachers/home tutors.

## **Pupils Transferring**

Pupils may transfer to the ASD class during the schools calendar year but they must enter the same class level that they are leaving, and have the necessary diagnosis and recommendations as outlined earlier. If transferring to the ASD Class, the child and both parents are requested to attend an interview with the principal and Class teacher prior to enrolment to ensure that the school can meet the needs of the child and that the needs of other children are not impinged upon. Transferring from another Primary school will not be facilitated during a school quarter i.e. July 1<sup>st</sup>, October 1<sup>st</sup>, January 1<sup>st</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Also, as the Primary School Education consists of an 8 year cycle, the board of management also specifies that junior infants are only admitted at the beginning of the school year and must be at least four years old by the first day of the school year, i.e. September 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **Post Acceptance**

Once a parent/guardian has made an application to the school for a place in the ASD class on behalf of a child, the Principal will undertake to communicate to the parent/guardian the decision of the Board of Management within 8 school weeks of the application. Applications for the following school year will be processed in February/March with Parents notified in writing whether they have been successful or not in securing a place in the ASD class.

1. The parents of a child being offered a place in the ASD 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. Prior to the start of the school year, he child may visit the ASD class to familiarise him/herself with the new setting/surroundings.
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 and will be supported by a psychologist from the N.E.P.S. (National Education Psychology Service) team.
5. The S.E.N.O. (Special Education Needs Officer) will also be made aware of the plan.
6. The plan will be updated on a regular basis by staff.
7. A child may be phased in gradually to the special class through a mutually agreed process between the school and the parents of the child. It is important that every child gets the best possible start in the class. In order to achieve this, the duration of the child's day may vary depending on their needs.
8. Each child in the ASD class will be assigned to an age appropriate mainstream class for integration purposes.

## **Integration**

The school promotes a policy of integration with age appropriate peers on a social level and ability appropriate on a curriculum level.

The policy is open to review at all times. The school insists that a maximum of 2 children per class be integrated at any given time. Early levels of integration into mainstream are on a social level only.

The child from the Autism Unit will not partake in general class learning until they have mastered the art of:

- Entering the class without trepidation
- Sitting down at a designated desk
- Interacting on a social level with the child(ren) nearest them

- Having lunch with the whole class
- Engaging in a 'buddy system' at playtime
- Acting on general teacher instructions within the classroom setting.

### **Curricular Integration**

Having adjusted on a social level the child from the Autism Unit will on a phased basis be introduced to areas of the curriculum appropriate to ability level. Music and/or PE and/or Art classes at will be targeted initially. Integration into these class will continue up through the classes. The children for the Autism Unit are also fully included in the school sports day.

### **Reverse Integration**

A policy of reverse integration will be introduced and extends to all classes. This involves:

The child from the Autism Unit being integrated for core curriculum subjects such as Maths and English initially through reverse integration whereby 2/3 children from the mainstream class are withdrawn to join the child in their own environment. It is hoped that this will in the long-term lead to conventional integration into the mainstream class.

The level of integration into a mainstream class for a core curriculum subject will be on an individual basis only and will differ from child to child. The school will retain discretion as to the particular children who should avail of core curriculum mainstream integration.

### **Refusal to Enrol and/or a Decision to Exclude**

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. All pupils including special needs pupils and non special needs pupils are subject to the School Code of Behaviour and Health & Safety Statement. The school reserves the right to review the child's progress from time to time whether during or after each year to determine whether this is indeed an appropriate school placement for the child.

The school reserves the right to refuse enrolment/admission to any student where either –

1. The student has special needs such that even with additional resources available from the Department of Education & Skills and the Department of Health, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the student with an appropriate education.
2. The school endeavours to support each child on an individual basis and ensure that it is an appropriate school placement for the child. However, if it is the opinion of the Board of Management that the student poses an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of him/herself or other students, to school staff or to school property, a decision may be made not to enrol the child and/or to exclude the child from the school.
3. Where a child's behaviour impacts in a negative way on the other children in the ASD class or another mainstream 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.

Taking into account the Department regulations and programmes, the rights of the patron as set out in the Education Act, and the funding available, the school supports the principles of

- Inclusiveness, particularly with reference to the enrolment of children with a disability or other special education need
- Equality of access and participation in the school
- Parental choice in relation to enrolment

- Respect for the diversity of values, beliefs
- Traditions, languages and ways of life in society

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 Special educational needs organiser decides that the school does not adequately meet the needs of the child

Taking all of the above into account, and based on the advice of the of the Principal, staff and autism team 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 unit once they have reached the age of twelve. Pupils who reach the age of twelve after September 30<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **Evaluation**

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

### **Review**

This policy is subject to review by the Board of Management every two years.

**Admissions and Enrolment Policy Designated Autism Unit**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Broadford & Kilbane N.S. at its meeting held on:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson, Board of Management.

Reviewed on

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_