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**Cappataggle N.S.**

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**Enrolment Policy for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Class**

This enrolment policy was written and ratified by the Board of Management of Cappataggle N.S. in June 2022. It is written in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, 1998, the Education Welfare Act, 2000, the Equal Status Act, 2000, the Disabilities Act, 2002, the Education of Persons with Special Needs Act, 2004 and other relevant legislation and circulars. The aim of this special enrolment policy is to assist parents/guardians in relation to enrolment matters concerning our special classes that support children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

**Background**

The purpose of our ASD class is to support children with ASD, who are experiencing, or would experience, difficulty in a mainstream class setting, to access the curriculum and maximise their potential for learning and personal development. This class also serves to prepare children with ASD to re-integrate into the mainstream school setting. **Therefore, enrolment to this class will only be available to children with ASD who, with the supports available in Cappataggle N.S., will have the capacity to, at least, partially integrate into a mainstream class.**

**Enrolment Procedure**

* The process of enrolling in our special class supporting children with ASD begins with an enquiry to the school – this can be a telephone call, e-mail or a visit from the parents/guardians.
* The caller will be informed of the current enrolment status of the special class and will also be directed to this enrolment policy on the school website.
* If an application proceeds, the application will include family details, and an up to date educational psychological assessment and diagnostic report.
* Fully completed application forms are recorded in the applications file and secure a place on the list of applicants.
* The application will undergo team assessment by the Admission Team, (The admission team is made up of the Principal, the Special Class teacher and a member of the Board of Management) to ensure that the application fulfils the enrolment criteria outlined in this policy.
* Once this process has been completed the applicant secures a place on the list of applicants to enrol. This list is organised on the basis of our enrolment criteria outlined below.
* When a place becomes available the parents and principal will complete the “Notification to NCSE of enrolment in a special class”. This is Form 7 available on [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie/)
* A school application form, incorporating family details and relevant medical history, is completed on enrolment for children who have secured a place.
* Dates for the meeting of the Admission Team and informing parents/guardians of the status of their enrolment application will be set out in our ASD Class Admissions Notice which will be published each September and available on the Enrolment page of our website.

**Enrolment Criteria**

*A further reminder that enrolment to this class will only be available to children with ASD who, with the supports available in Cappataggle N.S., will have the capacity to, at least, partially integrate into a mainstream class.*

The maximum class size is in each special class is six pupils. 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. If the number of children on the list of applicants to enrol exceeds the number of places available, the following criteria will apply in priority order, beginning with number one – subject to meeting all the criteria and completing all the procedures outlined in this policy

* **Category 1)** Children with an ASD diagnosis currently enrolled in the school.

*If the number of applicants in category 1 exceeds the number of available places, the Board reserves the right to determine the applicants to be enrolled. The following criteria will be considered:*

*1) Suitability for enrolment considering the needs/age/abilities of those currently enrolled and those seeking enrolment.*

*2) Length of time waiting for enrolment.*

* **Category 2)** Children with an ASD diagnosis living within the parish of Cappataggle.

*If the number of applicants in category 2 exceeds the number of available places, the Board reserves the right to determine the applicants to be enrolled. The following criteria will be considered:*

*1) Suitability for enrolment considering the needs/age/abilities of those currently enrolled and those seeking enrolment.*

*2) Distance from the school (as the crow flies).*

*3) Length of time waiting for enrolment*

* **Category 3)** Children with an ASD diagnosis with siblings enrolled in the school.

*1) Suitability for enrolment considering the needs/age/abilities of those currently enrolled and those seeking enrolment.*

*2) Length of time waiting for enrolment.*

* **Category 4)** If spaces are still available, places will be allocated as to children with an ASD diagnosis from outside the Cappataggle area.

*If the number of applicants in category 3 exceeds the number of available places, the Board reserves the right to determine the applicants to be enrolled. The following criteria will be considered:*

*1) Suitability for enrolment considering the needs/age/abilities of those currently enrolled and those seeking enrolment.*

*2) Distance from the school (as the crow flies).*

*3) Length of time waiting for enrolment.*

Every year after Easter, the school will write to all parents/guardians of applicants on the waiting list offering them an option to stay on the list.

**Inclusion**

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 Admission Team decide that the school is unable to adequately meet the needs of the child

Taking all of the above into account, and based on the advice of the Admission Team for the special classes, 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 special classes for children with ASD 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 special classes may also happen if a pupil is fully integrated into the mainstream school.

**Policy on the Integration and Inclusion of pupils from the Autism Unit into Mainstream Classes**

The need for a policy on inclusion developed from the collective desire of the teaching staff to have a defined and uniform whole school approach to the issue of integration. The policy was devised following consultation with all stake holders including the Principal, mainstream and special class teachers, the National Educational Psychological Service, National Council for Special Education and the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills.

Section 2 of the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004 states ‘A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with:

* The best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under this act, or
* The effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated’.

The amount of integration/reverse integration that each child receives in Cappataggle N.s. is collectively decided upon by those professionals who deal with the child each day i.e. teachers (both special education teachers and mainstream), the Principal and support staff. The views of other interested parties such as Psychologists, Speech Therapists and Occupational Therapists will be taken into account. However, the staff’s decision is final.

**Rationale**

The policy was formulated so that:

1. Teaching staff had well defined guidelines on best practice
2. Parents were aware of these practices
3. There is consistency throughout the school
4. Optimum learning experiences were provided for all the children of the school body.

**Aims**

1. To provide a teaching and learning experience that enables pupils with special educational needs to become exposed to learning in a mainstream setting
2. To enable the children in the mainstream classes to observe and interact with children with special needs, encouraging understanding and tolerance
3. To develop the social skills and self-esteem of the children in the Autism Class.

**Staff Roles**

**Principal**

With reference to the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004, the role of the principal entails:

1. Direct responsibility for co-ordinating an effective whole school approach to integration
2. Responsibility for the provision of in-service training and adequate resourcing
3. Monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and making relevant adjustment following consultation
4. Working with parents and out-of-school agencies.

**Special Class Teachers**

1. Will identify the appropriate curriculum area the child in the Autism Class should experience
2. Ensure SNA support is available during any period of integration
3. Collaborate and consult with mainstream teachers in setting specific, measurable, achievable, relevant short-term and long term targets
4. Assume responsibility for an ongoing IEP in consultation with the relevant support services, parents and the Principal. At present each Special Class Teacher is only obliged to produce one IEP per school year. It is up to the professional opinion of the teacher involved if the IEP needs to be updated more frequently.

**Class Teachers**

1. Will differentiate teaching programmes to meet the needs of the child from the Autism Class.
2. Provide a suitable seating arrangement in a mainstream setting.
3. Collaborate with the Special Class Teacher and the SNA.
4. Provide feedback on progress.

**Special Needs Assistants/Care Assistants**

Each class will be allocated a number of SNA’s by the area SENO.

Generally, the SNA’S are allocated to the school and employed by the Department of Education. They are not assigned to any one child and there is great scope in their job specification to move between classes when needs arise.

Their main role is to assist the class teacher with the specific goals and targets set down in the child’s IEP.

**Implementation**

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. Early levels of integration into mainstream are on a social level only. The child from the Autism Class 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 Class will, on a phased basis, be introduced to areas of the curriculum appropriate to ability level. Art and Craft classes at junior and senior Infant level will be targeted initially. Integration into this class will continue up through the classes.

Music has also been designated an area open to integration. This extends to school choirs, school plays and other appropriate events. Religion and SPHE are also open to integration.

Physical Education is also an area open to integration. The child is integrated into the class that best suits his/her physical condition. This includes coaching from outside agencies and timetabled sessions in the school gym.

The children from the Autism Class are also fully included in the school sports day as appropriate.

**Reverse Integration**

A policy of reverse integration extends to all classes. This involves:

1. The child from the Autism Class being integrated for core curriculum subjects such as Maths and English initially through reverse integration whereby 3-4 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**

2. Children from the mainstream classes may engage in life skills integration as appropriate.

3. Children from the senior classes provide reverse integration by accompanying the children on weekly swimming sessions and social outings.

4. A timetabled buddy system involving the children from the Autism Class and children from 3rd and 4th classes is operational for all playtimes throughout the year.

**Staff Development:**

Opportunities for in-service staff development in relation to the implementation of a workable system of integration will be provided once a year by a suitably qualified practitioner.

We, the undersigned, agree to the terms and conditions of enrolment to Cappataggle ASD Class.

Signed:

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----------------------------------------------- Parent(s)/ Guardian(s)

----------------------------------------------- S. Dervan (School Principal)

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----------------------------------------------- Class Teacher(s)

----------------------------------------------- M. Hannon, Chairperson, Board of Management

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**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 was adopted by the Board of Management of Cappataggle N.S. on:

Date: 16/6/2022

Signed:

Chairperson, Board of Management.