**Scoil Chaitríona, Cappamore, Co. Limerick.**

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**Autism Class Enrolment Policy**

**2024**

**Introduction**

Scoil Chaitríona is a co-educational mainstream school in Cappamore, Co. Limerick. With a growing awareness of the increasing need for the provision of special education for children with autism in our locality, our first Autism Class was established in 2019. The purpose of the class was to support children with autism who were experiencing or would experience difficulty in a mainstream class setting, to access the curriculum and maximise their potential for learning and personal development. Our second Autism Class opened in 2022. The Board of Management of Scoil Chaitríona, has set out this enrolment policy in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000-2012, the Disabilities Act 2002 and the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004. The Board of Management trusts that this policy will assist interested parties in understanding the admissions policy and the enrolment criteria.

**Aim**

We aim to offer a positive, inclusive, meaningful, educational experience, working within a mainstream educational setting, which allows the child to develop to their full potential in an environment that offers clarity, routine, predictability and calm. This will enable each child to benefit from an integrated and inclusive education. The school aspires to enhance the child’s communication, social and personal skills and to support the emotional development of each child by setting appropriate and personalised targets.

**Class Size**

Scoil Chaitríona Autism Classes comprise of a Junior class and a Senior class. Places will be allocated by the Admissions Committee to a maximum of 6 children per class. On the condition that the necessary space, services, resources and funding are provided and continue to be provided, by the National Council for Special Education (NSCE), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Education and Skill (DES). Under guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills the maximum capacity is 6 pupils per class. Access to speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, psychology, psychiatry and behavioural therapy will be dependent on the provision of the local Health Service Executive (HSE) services.

**Enrolment**

The Board of Management reserves the right of admissions within the terms of this policy. Other factors that may be considered in the enrolment process include:

* Size and available space in classrooms
* Educational needs of children of a particular age
* Presence of children with special educational/behavioural needs
* Health and Safety

The Board of Management will not, with due regard to legislation refuse a child on the basis of:

* Ethnicity
* Disability
* Traveller Status
* Political Beliefs
* Family and Social circumstances
* Religious Beliefs

**Application Procedure for Enrolment**

1. Applications begin with a referral to the Autism class from the SENO and/or contact from the parents.
2. Enrolment Application Forms for the Autism Class will be accepted until the closing date for submissions of enrolment applications which is the 31st of February annually. All applications will be placed on a waiting list in order of the date of receipt of completed Enrolment Application Form for the Autism Class. Applications received on or before this date will be acknowledged within one calendar month of the closing day for the submission of applications.
3. Requests for Enrolment Application Forms for the Autism Class and queries regarding supporting documentation should be made to The Principal, Scoil Chaitríona, Cappamore, Co. Limerick, V94HH98, Phone -061 381774.

*Receipt of acknowledgement of an enrolment application does not constitute an offer of a place nor does it guarantee a place in the school. It is simply the recording of an application for admission to our school. Decisions in relation to applications for enrolment are made by the Admissions Committee in accordance with our enrolment policy.*

**The Enrolment Application must be accompanied by all of the following supporting documentation supplied by the parents**:

1. The child must have a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum made using the DSM-IV/V or ICD 10 by a professionally recognised clinical psychologist.
2. Original birth certificate and proof of address.
3. A written psychological assessment/report (**dated within 18 months prior to the Application being submitted)** from a multi-disciplinary team must be provided. Reports as appropriate from all areas of the multi-disciplinary team - Clinical Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech & Language Therapist and/or Physiotherapist must be included.
4. A full cognitive assessment if possible and an assessment of the child’s adaptive functioning.
5. 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. **This recommendation must be no older than eighteen months.**
6. The child has access to, and will continue to have access to, specified services as recommended - for example Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Psychology.
7. In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, parents/guardians are required to provide written consent that the Admissions Committee can contact outside disability and support services that their children are attending.
8. All applications received by the closing date will be considered by the Admissions Committee. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

**The Admissions Committee**

The Admission Committee will include the Principal, Special Needs Co-ordinator and the Autism Class Teachers. The Admissions Committee may seek the advice of the school’s allocated NEPS Psychologist. The function of the Admissions Team is to:

* Ascertain how many places are to be filled in the Autism class. The maximum number of pupils in the class will be 6 pupils.
* Review all applications and all documentation relevant to a child applying for a place in the ASD class.
* Verify the class’s suitability in meeting the needs of the child.
* Verify that there is a recommendation from a psychologist for a placement in a special class in a mainstream school.
* Verify the suitability of the child for potential meaningful integration in an age appropriate mainstream class.
* Verify that the child is 4 years old on or before September 1st on the year of enrolment.
* Parents/guardians will be invited on another occasion to come with their child to the school to meet staff and to see the classroom.
* The child will have the ability to access the National Primary Curriculum and integrate where appropriate into the mainstream class.
* Identify qualifying applicants with reference to these criteria.
* Prioritise each qualifying applicant with reference to selection criteria (see below)
* To make a recommendation based on these findings to the Board of Management.

**Selection Criteria**

In the event that the number of children that apply for a place is greater than the number of places, such places will be filled on review of Enrolment Applications received in the following order of priority:

* Pupils enrolled and attending the school and seeking to transfer to the Autism class.
* Siblings of current pupils of the school.
* Children of current school staff.
* Children living in parish of Cappamore.
* Children living outside of the parish

*In the event that the number of children in any category exceeds the numbers of places available, qualifying applicants will be offered a place in accordance with a ‘first come, first served’ basis as per the waiting list.*

**Unsuccessful Qualifying Applicants**

All unsuccessful qualifying applicants will be placed on the Placement List, in accordance with the above criteria for places that may become available. All unsuccessful applicants have a right to appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 within 42 days from the date of the decision by the Board of Management. The Placement List is valid for vacancies which occur in the current school year only. All applications will be reviewed with reference to the selection criteria in March/April each year.

**Pupils Transferring**

Pupils may transfer to the Autism class during the school year subject to availability of places. Pupils transferring must enter the same class level that they are leaving, and have the necessary diagnosis and recommendations as outlined above.

**Placement**

* Parents who are offered a place must complete and return our Enrolment Form for the Autism Class within two weeks of the letter of offer to accept a placement. If the school does not receive the Registration Form within the two week period, the place will be offered to the next child on the Placement List for that school year.
* The parents of the child must accept and agree to the terms of the school’s Code of Behaviour policy and other relevant policies.
* In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, parents/guardians are required to provide written consent that the Admissions Team can contact outside disability and support services that their children are attending.
* Parents of children in the Autism Classes will be required to actively liaise with the HSE for essential services based on their needs, for example Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Psychology.
* The child will be phased in gradually to the ASD class through the mutually agreed process between the school’s Admissions Committee and the parents of the child. It is imperative that every child gets the best possible start in the class. To achieve this, the duration of the child’s day or school starting date may vary depending on the needs of the child.
* The school acknowledges and values the role of the parent as the primary educator of their children. Communication between parents/guardians and the class teacher is imperative and a fundamental part of daily life in the school. A child’s communication diary will be active throughout the school year.
* After placement in the Autism Class, a relevant Individual Educational Plan (IEP) will be provided for the child. This plan will have an input from all parties involved with the education of the child. The Autism Cass 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.
* Each child in the Autism Class will be assigned to an age appropriate mainstream class for integration purposes provided that this is in the best interest of the child, while having due regard to the educational benefit of all pupils enrolled in our school. Every opportunity will be used to promote inclusion in mainstream classes provided that the child is ready for this step and has the necessary supports in place.

**A review will take place at the end of every year to assess whether the child’s placement is appropriate. The review will be carried out by the Admissions Committee with parental involvement. The Admissions Team may seek the advice of the child’s Disability Team and /or NEPS. The outcome of the review will be examined by the Admissions Committee and the Board of Management. If in the event that a placement is inappropriate, the school will liaise with appropriate agencies in an effort to obtain a more suitable placement.**

**Behaviour**

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 Educational Plan. Where a child’s behaviour impacts in a negative way on the other children in the 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 sought for their child.

**Discharge**

It is school policy to facilitate the discharge of pupils from the classroom once they have reached the age of thirteen. It will be deemed compulsory that the year that the child turns 13 years of age will be their last year, enrolled in Scoil Chaitríona. Pupils who reach the age of thirteen after the 30th of September in any year will be permitted to complete the academic year. This means a June discharge in the following year. The onus will be on the parents to negotiate the placement with a suitable secondary school. Scoil Chaitríona will facilitate all transfer of records/reports as well as assist with any information required with regards to the pupil. Scoil Chaitríona will be deemed to have authority to forward all relevant reports and assessments to the Secondary school unless specifically instructed in writing not to do so. Discharge may also be recommended after the first and/or any subsequent year if following psychological assessments and consultation with the parents/guardians, it is felt that the placement is no longer appropriate and doesn’t serve the best interest of the child. Discharge may also happen if a pupil is fully integrated into the mainstream school. The Board of Management has the right to overrule any decision made in this regard.

**Evaluation**

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

**Ratification**

This policy was ratified on the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

Chairperson of the Board of Management