

*'Mol an Óige agus tiocfaidh sí'
Praise the young and they will blossom*

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Admission Policy for the Autism Class in Holy Rosary School

Section 1: Autism Class

The decision to provide a special class in Holy Rosary Primary School for children with a diagnosis of Autism was initiated by the Board of Management of the school in conjunction with the Principal and staff in April 2025 and finalised in June 2025. The decision was taken with a view to provide an education in a mainstream setting for children with Autism and who fulfil the enrolment criteria. The decision was taken primarily to cater for children resident in the parish of Bohernabreena who have been recommended for placement in an Autism 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 in order to ensure that the placement continues to be appropriate for each child. The maximum class size is 6 pupils.

Section 2: Our Aims

Our Autism Class offers a specific learning environment within our mainstream co-educational primary school where we aim to:

- offer a positive, meaningful, educational experience which allows the child to develop their full learning potential in a predictable and calm environment
- provide a broad curriculum which focuses on the abilities and strengths of each child while supporting their areas of need
- facilitate optimum inclusion in mainstream education as part of the school community as appropriate

Section 3: Terminology/Language

There are differing and changing views on the terminology to use when describing Autism. We endeavour to use the most appropriate language.

Section 4: Admissions Procedure for the Autism Class

The school will indicate the number of places being made available in the Autism Class each year in the Annual Admissions Notice (available on the website) in addition to indicating the dates the school will both commence and cease accepting applications for admission.

The following procedure should be read in conjunction with the General Admission Policy for Holy Rosary Primary School.

The following criteria must be met before making an application for the Autism Class.

- Letter of Eligibility from the NCSE
- Diagnosis of Autism: DSM IV/V or ICD 10/11 (psychologist, psychiatrist, multi-disciplinary report). The report must be dated within 24 months of the admission application
- A demonstration of the understanding of complexity of the child's overall level of need/s evidenced in the professional reports
- Given the severity or complexity of the child's support needs, a clear professional recommendation that the child requires the support of a special class setting for children with Autism along with the rationale for same. The report must state that placement in such a special class in a mainstream school is both necessary and suitable for the child.

Please note that fulfilling the enrolment criteria does not necessarily ensure enrolment if sufficient places are not available and/or sufficient classroom space is not available.

Steps in the Application Process

Step 1

The **Application for Enrolment Form** which is available from the school office or online must be completed and accompanied by the following

1. A copy of the child's **Birth Certificate**
2. **Two original proof of residency documents** (dated within six months of application), as proof of address within the catchment area. The following documents are suitable- utility bills eg gas/electric, Revenue communication re Local Property Tax or rental agreement/ lease agreement on house/apartment, current official correspondence from Revenue Commissioners eg a Tax Certificate or correspondence from Department of Social Protection re Child Benefit. The residential address of applicants will be strictly checked. Please note that addresses of relatives are not acceptable.

Step 2

The following **supporting documents**:

- A full, current (dated within 24 months of the application) Psychological & Cognitive Assessment which must specify Autism using the DSMIV/V or ICD10/11
- Letter of eligibility from NCSE
- The report must state and outline that the child has complex learning needs where placement in an Autism Class in a mainstream school is both necessary and suitable for the child

Step 3

Any offer of a place is subject to the approval of the Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) within the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

Applicants will be notified of the decision in respect of their application no later than **10 days** after the date on which Applications close (as outlined in our Annual Admissions Notice for our Special Class).

Step 4

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) who are offered a place must **accept the offer in writing/ by email within 10 days**. If the school does not receive a written acceptance within the outlined time frame the place will be offered to the next child on the Placement List for that school year.

Step 5

- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of applicants that have received confirmation of a place will be invited to the school for a meeting with the Principal and/or the Special Class teacher and any other relevant parties. Staff from our school may visit the successful applicants in their existing placements. We encourage all successful applicants and their parent(s)/guardian(s) to visit our school and the Autism Class prior to school commencement.

Section 5: Oversubscription of the Autism Class.

- The Department of Education states that the ratio for an Autism Class is a maximum of 6 children to one teacher and two Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). There must be more than three children to access the second SNA.
- In the event that the Autism Class is oversubscribed and that those that have met the criteria in Section 4 (see the above Admissions Procedure) the school will, when deciding on applications for admission, apply the following selection categories in the order listed

Category 1	Children currently enrolled in Holy Rosary Primary School who meet the criteria in Section 4 above
Category 2	Siblings and step siblings of a) students already enrolled and b) former students in Holy Rosary Primary School who meet the criteria in Section 4 above.
Category 3	Children resident in the parish of Bohernabreena who meet the criteria in Section 4 above
Category 4	Children of staff who meet the criteria in Section 4 above
Category 5	Children who reside outside the parish of Bohernabreena who meet the criteria in Section 4 above

Where category 1-4 are oversubscribed, priority will be given to the eldest child/children within that category. In the event that there are two or more children tied for a place, a lottery will apply.

With regards to Category 5, if oversubscribed, priority will be given to the student(s) living in closest proximity to the school – distance from the school will be determined solely by the Board of Management. Within Category 5, in the event that two or more students live equal distance from the school (as determined by the Board of Management), priority will be given to the eldest student. In the event that there are two or more students tied for a place at this point, a lottery will apply. Students who do not receive a place, due to over-subscription, will be placed on the 'Main Waiting List'. Please note, for each subsequent academic year, a new application will be required for every student that remains on the previous year's 'Main Waiting List' – as the waiting list will become null and void when the new application process opens as per the relevant Annual Admission Notice).

Section 6: Late Applications and Student Transfers Late Applications

All applications for admission received after the closing date as outlined in the Annual Admission Notice will be considered and decided upon in accordance with our school's Admission Policies, the Education Admissions to School Act 2018 and any regulations made under the Act. Late applicants will be notified of the decision in respect of their application no later than three weeks after the date on which the school received the application. Late applicants will be offered a place if there is a place available, after all students from Categories 1-5 that applied during the annual notice period have been offered places. In the event that there is no space available, the name of the applicant will be added to the 'Late Applications Waiting List' for the Autism Class (the name of the applicant will be added to the relevant category – where more than one student remains on this waiting list from the same category, the date of application will indicate priority). The last date for a late application to be made each year will be the 31st of August. After this date, no new applications may be made, until the new admission process reopens as per the dates outlined in the Annual Admission Notice. Therefore, for each subsequent academic year, a new application will be required for every student that remains on the previous year's 'Late Applications' waiting list – as the waiting list will become null and void when the new applications process opens as per the relevant Annual Admission Notice).

Student Transfers

Students may transfer to the Autism Class during the school year, subject to availability of places and to the adherence of the criteria (Section 4 above) and categories (Section 5 above).

Section 7: Placement

After placement in the Autism Class, a Student Support Plan (SSP) will be developed for the student. This plan will have input from all parties involved in the student's education. Each student in the Autism Class will be assigned to an age appropriate mainstream class for integration and inclusion purposes provided that this is in the best interests of the student, while having due regard to the educational benefit of all students enrolled in our school. Integration (and reverse integration) and inclusion will be determined based on the individual needs of the students, and through discussion with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the relevant class teacher. All placements are subject to review at the request of the parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or the school. The review will include input from all agencies involved (through a multidisciplinary team meeting), the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school. Following the review, a recommendation may be made that the student be enrolled in a school that can better meet his/her needs. Every opportunity will be used to promote inclusion in mainstream classes provided the child is ready for this step and has the necessary supports in place.

Section 8: Behaviour

It is accepted that children with special educational needs (SEN) may display difficult and/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 (IEP). 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 found for their child. All children including SEN and non-SEN children are subject to the Code of

Behaviour and the Health and Safety Statement. The Board of Management reserves the right to suspend or expel a child if they contravene the Code of Behaviour. All parent(s)/guardian(s) are asked to agree to their child's compliance with the Code of Behaviour of Holy Rosary Primary School on enrolment.

Section 9: Outside Agencies

Access to speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy etc. will be dependent on (local) HSE services. Input by professionals will be facilitated and welcomed in the school if required or requested.

Section 10: Approaches to Teaching and Learning

The students will access a curriculum based on the Primary School Curriculum that is matched to their needs and capabilities, through carefully targeted Student Support Plans and through the use of differentiated strategies.

Section 11: Discharge

It is school policy to facilitate the discharge of students from the Autism Class once they have reached the age of thirteen. It will be deemed compulsory that the year that the student turns 13 will be their last year in primary school. Students who reach the age of 13 after September 30th in any year will be permitted to complete that academic year. This means a June discharge in the following year. The onus will be on the parent(s) / guardian(s) to negotiate the placement with a suitable secondary school. Holy Rosary Primary School will support and facilitate all transfer of records and reports as well as assist with any information required with regards to the student. Holy Rosary Primary School 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 for the purposes of full integration into the mainstream class may also be recommended at the end of any given school year, following consultation with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and relevant professionals if it is felt that the placement in the Autism Class is no longer appropriate or serves the best interest of the student. The Board of Management has the right to overrule any decision made in this regard.

Ratification and Communication:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on the 16th June 2025.

This policy was approved by the Archdiocese of Dublin Education Secretariat on the 17th June 2025

The policy is available via the school website.

Monitoring the Implementation of the Policy:

The implementation of the policy shall be monitored by the Principal. At least one annual report shall be issued to the Board of Management to confirm that the measures/procedures set down under the policy are being implemented.

Reviewing and evaluating the Policy:

The policy should be reviewed and evaluated as the need arises but at least every second year. Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information or guidelines, legislation and feedback from stakeholders.

The policy should be reviewed as necessary in the light of such a review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

Signed by:

Date:

Des Cathcart

17th June 2025

On behalf of the Board of Management