



Admissions Policy

School-Age Autism Class

2024-25

Introduction

This policy is set out in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, 1998. Skerries Educate Together N.S is a national school which operates under the patronage of Educate Together. A special class for school aged children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) was opened in the school year 2021/2022, and this policy sets out the admissions procedure in respect of that class for the 2024-25 school year.

Skerries Educate Together operates under the Rules for National Schools, The Education Act (1998), The Education Welfare Act (2000), enacted sections of The Education of Persons with Special Education Needs Act (2004), The Disabilities Act (2002), and all relevant equality legislation and Department of Education (DE) Circulars.

Educate Together schools are national schools that teach the national Primary Curriculum and are open to all, irrespective of social, cultural or religious background.

School Ethos

Educate Together schools have four underlying principles:

1. Equality-based: All children are treated equally, children of all denominations and none are equally welcome into our schools.
2. Co-educational: Educate Together schools are open to girls and boys and gender stereotyping is addressed and challenged.
3. Child-centred: This applies not only to teaching and learning within the classroom but to all decisions at staff and management level, which must have the well-being of the children at heart.
4. Democratically-run: Parents are viewed as a positive resource for the school. Parental involvement is welcomed and encouraged, where appropriate. The professional role of the teacher is validated at all times.

Context of Skerries ETNS

Approval was granted by the Department of Education (DE) in 2019 for funding for a 4-classroom extension project in Skerries Educate Together National School to cater for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This

project is being managed on behalf of the school by the Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB). LMETB is currently engaged in the planning and procurement process for these classes in a permanent building. The current timeline for the delivery and occupancy of these additional classrooms is unclear, as the school is awaiting approval from the Department of Education (DE) of the stage 2b report that was submitted in February 2023. An estimated completion date of September 2024 will now be missed, and there has been no update from the DE in recent months, despite regular contact from LMETB to enquire about its progress.

A new modular classroom was installed on the grounds of Skerries ETNS in the summer of 2023 and this will be the classroom used by the school-aged Autism class into the foreseeable future from October 2023.

The decision by the Board of Management to open this class was taken with a view to providing a specialised education, within a mainstream setting, for children who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, who fulfil the enrolment criteria and for whom a place is available.

The establishment and continuing provision of this class is contingent on the necessary funding and resources being furnished to Skerries Educate Together by DES. This School Policy has regard to and is contingent on the funding, resources, services and space available to our school in the future.

As Skerries ETNS had no other space available to locate any additional special classes, one special class for children with autism was opened in September 2021. This class was designated as a Junior Class (i.e. it caters for pupils in Senior Infants – Third Class). Given the space limitations facing our school, no additional classes will open until the permanent, four-class extension has been built.

Our Mission

In opening this school-aged Autism class, our mission is to offer a positive meaningful educational experience, which allows the child to develop to his/her full learning potential in an environment that offers clarity, predictability and calm. After a period of time observing, assessing and interacting with the child, a Student Support File will be developed in consultation with parents and relevant professionals/external agencies. This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and will highlight priority learning needs. These needs will be targeted through the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum.

Our Aim

The school-aged Autism class aims to offer an autism-specific learning environment within a mainstream co-educational national school. This setting facilitates optimum inclusion as part of the school community with access to mainstream activities as appropriate. It is the Board of Management's aim that the children attending the school-aged Autism class will experience an inclusive education that caters for their learning and social needs.

Criteria for enrolment in Autism Class

Enrolment applications will only be valid if **ALL** criteria have been met. Subject to sufficient places being available in the school-aged Autism class, the criteria for enrolment incorporating the DE and Health Service Executive (HSE). policies are as follows:

1. Each child must have a primary diagnosis of Autism / Autistic Spectrum Disorder made using the DSM-V or ICD 10 by the psychologist or a member of the Multi-Disciplinary Team. This report must be current (within the last 12 months)
2. There must be an explicit recommendation by a member of the Multi-Disciplinary Team in the report that a **special class placement in a mainstream school** is both necessary and suitable for the child.
3. An Application Form provided by the school must be fully completed by the parent(s)/carer(s) on behalf of the child. This Application Form must be accompanied by the original birth certificate and all other Supporting Documentation in the section '**Application Process**'.
4. A recent psychological assessment or a report from a member of a multidisciplinary team should 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 for a child should be provided to the school, for consideration by the Admissions Team. The withholding of reports from the school Admissions Team may invalidate an Enrolment Application at any time.
5. As inclusion is an integral part of our school ethos, it is a necessary criteria of enrolment that any child attending the special class must have the potential for meaningful integration into a mainstream setting. Thus, the child's level of need mustn't prevent him/her from interacting and

integrating into mainstream. It is necessary that the child will be able to integrate academically and socially, as appropriate, in both the mainstream school and the Autism class.

6. The parent(s)/carer(s) of the child must accept and agree to the school's Code of Behaviour and the terms of this policy.

Please note

- Where possible, a letter of acceptance from the clinical support service(s) associated with the pupil's learning challenges should be submitted with the application form. The school has no responsibility for the provision of such professional services to pupils attending the specialised class.
- When a complete application is submitted, the date and time of receipt are noted on the application form and an acknowledgement is sent by email indicating that the application has been received.
- An acceptance form as issued by the school must be returned to the school within fourteen working school days of the date of issue. If this confirmation is not received within that timeframe, the school will take it that the place is not being accepted and the place will be reallocated.
- Fulfilling the enrolment criteria does not necessarily ensure enrolment if sufficient places are not available and/or sufficient classroom space is not available.

Integration

It is hoped that children attending our school-aged Autism class will not require this provision for the duration of their primary school education. Integration for these children, in a wide and varied range of school experiences, is the Board's aim.

The nature of this integration will be determined by the teaching staff, following reviews at appropriate intervals, and through consultation with the child's parents. Partial (leading to full) integration will be put in place for children who are successful in the integrated setting. In this regard, success is that the child is capable of meaningful learning and social experiences within the setting.

Partial integration will take place across a variety of school activities such as assemblies, school trips, curriculum areas or school celebrations.

Support by Outside Agencies

A guarantee of support by outside agencies such as the HSE cannot be provided by the school. Children who require speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, etc., will be dependent on local public or private services. The school does not have the resources to follow up on these services and it is up to the parents/carers to ensure that all possible services are being availed of.

Admissions Team

Each application received will be considered by the Admissions Team. The team may include the School Principal, Deputy Principal, a member of the In-School Management Team, the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and/or the Autism class teacher. The Admissions Team may liaise with the school's NEPS psychologist. A recommendation will be made by the Admissions Team in relation to each application to the Board of Management of the school. Decisions in relation to applications for enrolment are made by the Board of Management.

Current Capacity

This refers to the 2024/25 school year. The school-aged Autism class can cater for a maximum of 6 children. A child may be phased in gradually to the school-aged Autism class.

Application Process

Requests for application forms and queries regarding supporting documentation should be made to:

School Secretary,
Skerries Educate Together National School,
Kelly's Bay
Skerries
Co Dublin

Telephone: 01 8494050

OR

Email: admin@skerrieseducatetogether.ie

The application process will open on Monday 6th November 2023, and close at 2pm on Monday 27th November 2023. Please note that only postal or hand-delivered applications will be accepted.

All complete applications received by this time will be considered. Receipt of acknowledgement of an application by the school 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 Board of Management in accordance with the Admissions Policy. The completed application must be accompanied by all of the relevant supporting documentation.

Supporting Documentation

The following Supporting Documentation must be supplied by parents/carers, and must accompany a fully complete application form.

- Original Birth Certificate.
- A Diagnosis from a psychiatrist, psychologist, or a member of a Multi-Disciplinary team that has assessed and classified the child as having autism or autistic spectrum disorder according to DSMV or ICD 10 criteria **and** a recommendation for a placement in a special class within a mainstream school.
- Any other relevant reports – speech & language therapy/occupational therapy and psychological reports

NB: If the school does not receive this documentation with the Application form, the application will not be processed or considered by the school. It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/carers(s) to ensure that all supporting documentation is correct and up-to-date, and is received by the school.

Oversubscription

In the event that the number of children that apply for a place in the school-aged Autism class is greater than the number of places available, such places will be filled on review of enrolment applications received in accordance with the timelines as set out in this policy, in the following order of priority:

Priority category A:

Current students of the school who meet the criteria for enrolment to the school-aged Autism class and who will benefit from a more appropriate setting in this class.

Priority category B:

Students with siblings currently enrolled in the school.

Priority category C:

Applicants who reside at an address having K32 or K34 as routing key with their address eircode.

Priority category D:

Children who have attended Seolta, our preschool class for children with Autism.

In the event of the number of children in category A exceeding the number of places available, children within this category will be offered a place according to their chronological age, starting with the oldest applicants suitable for the school-aged Autism Class

Thereafter;

In the event of the number of children in category B exceeding the number of places available, children within this category will be offered a place according to their chronological age, starting with the oldest applicants suitable for the school-aged Autism Class

Thereafter;

In the event of the number of children in category C exceeding the number of places available, children within this category will be offered a place according to their chronological age, starting with the oldest applicants suitable for the school-aged Autism Class

Thereafter;

In the event of the number of children in category D exceeding the number of places available, children within this category will be offered a place according

to their chronological age, starting with the oldest applicants suitable for the school-aged Autism class

Thereafter:

In the event of places being available after all categories have been processed, children will be offered a place according to their chronological age, starting with the oldest applicants suitable for the school-aged Autism class

We are conscious of the impact that a new child may have on existing learners in an Autism class. Therefore, in exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to prioritise age or learning profile over the above categories. This is to ensure the stability and safety of existing pupils in the school-aged Autism class.

Offer of Place in school-aged Autism class

A child will be offered a place in our school-aged Autism class if all of the assessment criteria are met and if there is a place available, following the priority categories as set out above.

If prior to enrolment, it becomes evident that the school cannot at present meet the required needs of the child, the child will be enrolled in the school and the following actions will take place:

1. The child's admission to the school will be delayed until the required supports are provided by the DES.
2. The school will notify, in writing, the parent(s)/carer(s) of the rationale for the decision.
3. The school will notify the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) of the decision and the requirements necessary for the school to meet the specified needs of the child.
4. The situation will be reviewed upon communications from the DE/SENO/NCSE.

Post Acceptance

Once a parent(s)/carer(s) has made an application to the school for a place in the school-aged Autism class on behalf of a child, the parent(s)/carer(s) of a child being offered a place in the class will be invited to visit the school to meet with the principal and/or SENCO/Autism class teacher. Any information requested by the parent(s)/carer(s) will be provided at this meeting.

The parent(s)/carer(s) 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 prior to their starting in Skerries ETNS. This is to help staff to become familiar with the needs of the child and to ensure that the adequate supports can be put in place.

The parent(s)/carer(s) will be invited on another occasion to come with their child to the school-aged Autism class to meet with staff and see the classroom.

After placement in the class a relevant Student Support File will be developed for the child. This plan will have input from all parties involved with the education of the child and will be supported by a psychologist from the NEPS (National Education Psychology Service) team. The Special Education Needs Officer (SENO) will also be made aware of the plan. The plan will be updated on a regular basis by staff.

A child may be phased in gradually to the school-aged Autism 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 his/her needs.

Each child in the school-aged Autism class will be assigned to an age appropriate mainstream class for inclusion purposes where appropriate.

Monitoring and Review

The school reserves the right to review the child's progress from time to time, during or after each year to determine whether the child is ready for inclusion into a mainstream class.

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 Student Support File and Behavioural Support Plan. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and pupils without special

educational needs, are subject to the School Code of Behaviour and Health & Safety Statement.

Where a child's behaviour impacts in a negative way on the other children in the school-aged Autism 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 Board reserves the right to advise parents that a more suitable setting should be found for their child.

Refusal to Enrol and/or a Decision to Exclude

The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse enrolment/admission to any student where either;

- The student has special needs such that even with additional resources available from the Department of Education and the Department of Health, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the student with an appropriate education.
- 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 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.
- Any applicant who applies for and is not offered a place in Skerries Educate Together National School has the right to appeal the decision under Section 29, with the Department of Education.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was approved by the school's Board of Management on 5th October 2023.

This Policy is valid for enrolments for 2024-25 school year only and is subject to annual review.

This policy will be published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy, on request, to any person who requests it.

Signed: (Richard Young, Chairperson Board of Management)

Signed: (Conor D'Arcy, Principal/Secretary to BOM)

Date: