



San Carlo Junior National School

Admissions Policy for Junior School Autism Class (4–8 year-olds)

Address of School:	Confey, Leixlip, Co. Kildare W23 E9D0
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Denomination:

San Carlo JNS is a Catholic Primary School under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. While maintaining its Catholic ethos, the school recognises, respects and welcomes diversity of culture, race and religion.

Teaching Staff:	Administrative Principal, 11 Mainstream Teachers, 4 Special Education Teachers, 1 E.A.L. Teacher and 1 Autism Class Teacher
Type of School:	Junior, Co-educational Primary School
School Hours:	9.20 – 2.00 (Infant Classes) 9.20 – 3.00 (1 st and 2 nd Classes)

General introduction

Our Autism Class caters for pupils aged 4 to 8 years of age, corresponding with our mainstream classes of Junior Infants to 2nd class.

The purpose of this class is to support children with Autism, 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. Therefore, enrolment to this class will only be available to children with Autism who have a recommendation from a Clinical Psychologist or appropriate agency. The Policies and Procedures outlined in this document are those which have been approved of and endorsed by the Board of Management.

This policy is in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998 Section 15(2). The Board of Management trusts that by giving this information, parents will be assisted in relation to enrolment matters. The Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management will be happy to clarify any further matters arising from the policy.

Aims of this ASD Enrolment Policy:

- To outline the school approach to teaching/learning in relation to pupils with autism.
- To set out procedures for the enrolment of children with autism into the Autism class.
- To assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child in our school.
- To outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to supporting the learning of pupils with autism.
- To establish communication structures for the involvement of all partners in the education of pupils with autism.
- To communicate to all parties the relevant and specific guidelines within which our class will function.
- To help the school avail fully of all the resources necessary to enable children to reach their full potential.

Enrolment Policy Statement:

The Enrolment policy of San Carlo JNS, in relation to applications for places in the Junior Autism Class and the continuous provision thereof, shall:

- be made within the context and the parameters of the matters set out below; and/
- be subject to and conditional upon:
 - (a) the Department regulations and programmes
 - (b) the rights of the Patron as set out in the Education Act 1998
 - (c) the provisions of Section 14 (b) (i) of the Equal Status Act 2000
 - (d) the funding and resources being provided and made available from year to year
 - (e) the school's enrolment policy.
- accommodate a maximum of one Autism Class for children with Autism.
- follow the Department of Education and Skills guidelines which states that the ratio for each class is a maximum of six pupils to one teacher.
- cater for children of Junior Primary School age only i.e. 4 years to 8 years. Pupils who reach the age of 8 years after September 30th will complete the academic year in San Carlo Junior School.

It is accepted that children with Special Educational/Additional 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. However, if it is in the opinion of the Board of Management that a student poses an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of other students, to school staff or to school property, the Principal will engage with the Special Education Needs Co-ordinator and the parents to seek appropriate alternative schooling for the pupil. Failing this, a decision may be made by the Board of Management, in line with the school's Code of Behaviour, to either suspend or expel that student. This decision will be open to appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act.

All Students, including students with Special Educational/Additional Needs, are subject to the "Health and Safety" statement and the "School Code of Behaviour".

Children with special educational needs mature and develop over time and their learning needs change over time. For this reason and to ensure that the Autism Class remains the most appropriate educational setting for those pupils enrolled there in, it is important that their educational placement is kept under regular review.

Enrolment Criteria:

The maximum class size is six. The Board of Management reserves the right to enrol less than the maximum number if it is deemed to be in the best interests of the class and the school.

- Each pupil must have a clinical diagnosis of Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder made using the DSM-IV/DSM V or ICD 10 by a clinical psychologist, a psychiatrist or a multi-disciplinary team along with a recommendation that the pupil's needs would be best met within an Autism Class in a mainstream school.
- Each pupil must fall within the mild/ moderate range of general intellectual disability so that the aim of integrating him/her into a mainstream class can be met.
- Copies of all relevant reports and assessments must be forwarded to the school prior to the child being considered for a placement.
- Each pupil must be four years of age before the first day of the academic year in which they wish to take up a placement.
- If the number of students on the list of applicants exceeds the number of places available, the following criteria will apply:

Category 1	<p>Children with an ASD diagnosis/recommendation currently enrolled in the school.</p> <p><i>If the number of applicants in category 1 exceeds the number of available places, the Board of Management reserves the right to determine the applicants to be enrolled. The following criteria will be considered:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Suitability of enrolment considering the needs/age of the child 2. Length of time waiting on enrolment list.
Category 2	<p>Children with a diagnosis/recommendation living within the catchment area of the school as outlined in our general enrolment policy (two utility bills must be supplied as proof of address – electricity, gas, bin charges will suffice)</p> <p><i>If the number of applicants in category 2 exceeds the number of available places, the Board of Management reserves the right to determine the applicants to be enrolled. The following criteria will be considered:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Suitability of enrolment considering the needs/age of the child 2. Length of time waiting on enrolment list.
Category 3	<p>If spaces are available, places will be allocated to children with an ASD diagnosis/recommendation from outside of the catchment area.</p> <p><i>If the number of applicants in category 3 exceeds the number of available places, the Board of Management reserves the right to determine the applicants to be enrolled. The following criteria will be considered</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Suitability of enrolment considering the needs/age of the child 2. Length of time waiting on enrolment list.

Enrolment Procedure:

- The Principal implements the enrolment policy on behalf of the Board of Management.
- The process of enrolling in our Autism Class supporting children with autism begins with an enquiry to the school. This can be via phone, email or visit from a parent, guardian. The caller will be informed of the current status of the Autism Class and will be directed to the enrolment policy on the school website, sancarlojunior.org.
- If the application proceeds, an application form, which is available from the school, must be completed in person by the parent/guardian.
- Applications are recorded incorporating date of application, name of applicant, name of child, child's date of birth (original birth cert to be presented), address of child/parent (proof of address required) and the child's present educational setting.
- The application will undergo assessment by the Admissions Team to ensure that the application fulfils the enrolment criteria outlined in this policy. This team is made up of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Special Education Teacher Coordinator and Autism Class teacher.
- All reports in existence on a child should be forwarded to the school for assessment by the Admissions Team. These will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and only shared with professionals on a need-to-know basis. The withholding of reports from the school Admissions Team may invalidate an enrolment application.
- Once the admissions process has been completed the applicant will be informed of the decision to offer a place on the enrolment list. This list is organised on the basis of the school's enrolment criteria, as previously outlined.
- When a place becomes available and is secured by a child, then the Principal, in co-operation with the parents/guardians, will complete the "Notification to NCSE of enrolment in an Autism Class". This is Form 7 which is available on www.ncse.ie.
- Please note that fulfilling the enrolment criteria does not necessarily ensure enrolment if sufficient places are not available.
- It is intended that a decision on the offer of a placement will be taken by February 28th of each school year.
- All unsuccessful applicants will be placed on a waiting list, in accordance with the stated criteria, for places that may subsequently become available. These pupils will be kept on the waiting list for a period of 2 years (not exceeding the age of 8 years) from the date for which they originally applied. Parents will be contacted each year to enquire if they want to remain on the waiting list.
- All unsuccessful applicants have a right of appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 within 42 days from the date of the decision by the Board of Management.

Transitioning successful applicants:

To ensure a smooth transition to school for both the pupil and the school the following steps shall be taken:

- The parents/guardians of the prospective candidates for the class must meet with the Principal, the Autism Class Teacher and any other relevant parties in an agreed setting prior to the child starting school.
- The prospective pupil visits the school setting.
- Relevant school staff shall visit the child at home and/or in early educational setting.

- Where a child is being seen by personnel from CDNT Services prior to enrolment (e.g. clinical nurse, social worker), contact will be made with said personnel.
- The Principal will liaise with the Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) to arrange for additional personnel, resources or training of staff if necessary.
- It is important that every pupil gets the best possible start in the Autism Class. To this end, each student will be phased in gradually to the Autism Class through a mutually agreed process between the school and the parents. The pupil's starting date and the duration of the pupil's school day may vary depending on his/her needs.
- Notification of a pupil's absence must be communicated to the school at the earliest opportunity.
- **When a pupil has reached the age of 8 years, during the academic year, it will be the responsibility of the SENO and the parents to find an appropriate educational setting in which to allow the child to complete his/her primary education.**

Aims of the Junior ASD Class

We aim to offer an educational programme appropriate to the child's needs with an emphasis on teaching communication, self-care and social skills. Ultimately, we aim to help the child to achieve his/her potential and to function as independently as possible.

Children with autism typically experience difficulties with language and communication, social skills, self-care skills, the development of relationships, understanding others' perspectives and rigidity of thinking. Many children with ASD have sensory integration difficulties and require frequent access to stress-relieving activities. In addition, they often display challenging behaviours associated with these difficulties.

Our school programme aims to help each pupil to reach his/her potential intellectually, socially and personally in a junior school setting. In developing a curriculum for our children with autism every effort is made to build on the children's individual strengths while at the same time attempting to alleviate their difficulties.

A range of teaching approaches, including those used in the school's mainstream classes, will be employed, based on the individual needs of the student.

The following are some approaches commonly implemented in ASD classes. These are supported by the Special Education Support Services (SESS)

- TEACCH programme (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children)
- Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA)
- Lámh (manual signing system)
- Social studies
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
- The Developmental, Individual Differences, Relationship –based model (D.I.R. Floortime)

Individual Education Plan:

After a period of time observing, interacting with and assessing the student, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be developed in consultation with parents and relevant professionals. This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

The development of an IEP will include the following steps –

- Gathering information (based on teacher, parent and SNA observations, clinical reports and children’s task records).
- Identification of a pupil’s strengths and needs
- Statement of level of performance across different domains as appropriate.
- Identification of priority needs and timeframe for attainment of targets.
- Setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely) targets for each priority learning need.
- Identification of the strategies and resources required.
- Setting date for review of IEP (IEPs are generally reviewed twice during the year).
- The Autism Teacher has responsibility for co-ordination of the IEP.
- Where possible the child might be included in identifying targets or preferred learning styles.

An IEP will generally include targets relating to the following areas-

- Personal and social skills
- Cognitive ability
- Motor skills
- Language and numeracy
- Attention to attitude and motivation
- Access to curriculum

The academic curriculum offered will reflect the NCCA Guidelines for students with Mild General Learning Difficulties and Moderate General Learning Difficulties as appropriate. It will also reflect aspects of the mainstream curriculum from Infant Level upwards to 2nd class, as appropriate, considering the ability and interests of the child.

The aims of the school curriculum include

- Developing the pupil’s communication, self-care and social skills
- Promoting independence in children with Autism. To this end the principles of the “TEACCH” system of education are employed to varying degrees – individual workstations, working left to right and following visual schedules. While the importance of structure is valued as providing a predictable environment for the students, the need to build on the student’s ability to be flexible is also recognised.
- Providing opportunities for inclusion in mainstream activities.
- Assisting children who exhibit challenging behaviour by using an eclectic approach including the development of coping strategies. These strategies include deep breathing exercises, focusing on learning calming phrases, and self- monitoring. The nature and extent of techniques will be added to when the teacher can avail of appropriate training. Advice from the NCSE and CDNT will be followed.

- Where appropriate to do so, developmental checklists and test results will be used to develop a curriculum to meet the needs of the individual child.

Record Keeping/Reporting:

- Each child's psychological report is used for enrolment and informs the staff about the child.
- Occupational and Speech & Language assessments and reports are kept on each child.
- IEPs are generally updated on a twice-yearly basis. There may be occasions when an IEP must be reviewed at an earlier stage if a child is having particular difficulties.
- Communication copies may be used to communicate how children are getting on in school. These copies may also be used by parents to report on issues/behaviours that may arise at home to indicate if a child has, for example, had a bad night's sleep or been ill the previous evening.
- Teachers may also use task records to keep track of children's work and observation sheets to record progress on targeted behaviours.
- At the end of each school year the class teacher will write a general report on the child's progress/work during the year.
- GDPR guidelines will be followed regarding the storage of all reports and records.
- Information concerning attendance and the child's education progress is communicated between schools when a child is transitioning to a new school (Section 28 of the Education Welfare Act 2000).

Evaluation:

All aspects of the programme will be reviewed regularly, and new-updated research and studies may influence policy change.

Support by Outside Agencies:

Parents should note that a guarantee of support by outside agencies such as the H.S.E. cannot be provided by the school. Students who require Speech and Language therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, etc. will be dependent on the local H.S.E services. The school does not have the resources to follow up on these services and it is up to the parents/guardians to ensure that all possible services are being availed of.

Parents will be contacted regarding any scheduled HSE school visits such as vision and hearing screening and inoculations.

Facilities:

- Children in the Autism class may avail of the sensory room, quiet room and other facilities and resources on a regular basis.
- Children will have supervised access to all areas of the school.

Integration/inclusion

- The Autism Class will be identified within the school by the class teacher's name/room 5 as is normal practice.
- It is the aim for any pupil attending the Autism Class that he/she can integrate/be included into a mainstream class setting. To this end, each pupil in the Autism Class will also be assigned a place in one mainstream class (in line with NCSE Guidelines for Setting Up and Organising Special Classes). The Special Education Teachers (SETs), the Autism Class Teacher and the relevant mainstream class teachers will engage in consultation in order to determine the level of integration appropriate for each child and to ensure that where integration takes place there is adequate support available at all times.
- Where appropriate, children may integrate/be included with mainstream classes for Art, P.E. and for Sacramental preparation in second class if desired. Some pupils may also integrate/be included for the Stay Safe Programme, RSE, SESE and some core curriculum subjects.
- Pupils from the Autism Class will have supervised access to an enclosed playground area. However, on occasion, they may access and share the main playground areas with mainstream classes.
- Children are integrated/ included as far as possible in school activities, e.g. assemblies, talks by visitors, competitions, etc.
- Examples of children's work may be displayed prominently in the school.

Staff Roles and Procedures:

- Relevant staff will work together to achieve the aims of the pupil's Individual Education Programme (IEP)
- The Staff endeavours to keep themselves informed of all relevant and new research in Autism.

Parental Involvement:

San Carlo JNS recognises the importance of regular direct contact with parents/guardians and encourages parental involvement in the following ways –

- The school draws on parental knowledge of their child to help the staff to work successfully with their child
- Parents/Guardians are consulted in the drawing up of IEPs.
- They are regularly informed of their child's progress and needs.
- Staff and parents communicate with each other regularly (using a copybook system/in person).
- The school communicates all relevant, general information about the school to them via Aladdin, school letters and the school website.
- Parents/Guardians are invited to all relevant school events.
- Parents may be elected to the BOM and are represented on the Parents' Association Committee.

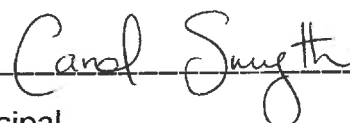
Discharge Policy

It is school policy to facilitate the discharge of pupils from the Autism Class once they have reached the age of 8 years. Pupils who reach the age of 8 after September 30th in any year will be permitted to complete that academic year in San Carlo. This means a June discharge in the following year. Discharge may also be recommended after the first year if the Admissions Team, following consultation with the parents/guardian and SENO, consider that the placement is not appropriate. Discharge from the Autism Class may also happen if a pupil becomes fully integrated into a mainstream class.

Timetable for review:

This policy will be reviewed in the 2025/26 school year.

Signed:  _____
Chairperson of BOM

Signed:  _____
Principal

Date: 01/10/24

