

**Callystown National School**

**Enrolment Policy**

**Special Class for Autistic Students 2025/26**

The Board of Management of Callystown National School has set out this policy in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act of 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000 and the Disabilities Act 2002. The Board trusts that by so doing, parents will be assisted in relation to enrolment of children in the school’s newly established special classes for children with autism.

Callystown National School is a mainstream co-educational primary school with an enrolment of approximately 260 pupils. Our school has a Catholic ethos under the patronage of the Archbishop of Armagh.

**Rationale for the Establishment of an Autism Class**

The decision to provide a special class for children with a diagnosis of Autism in Callystown National School was taken by the Board of Management in conjunction with the Principal and Staff in January 2025. The decision was taken with a view to provide an education in a mainstream setting for children who have an Autism and who fulfil the enrolment criteria. The classes, for children from Junior Infant to SecondClass age groups, is due to open in September 2025.

**Aims and Objectives**

We aim to offer a positive, meaningful, educational experience, which allows each child to develop to his/her full learning potential in an environment that offers clarity, predictability and calm. Our Autism Class offers an autism specific learning environment within a mainstream co-educational primary school. This setting facilitates optimum inclusion in mainstream education as part of the school community, as appropriate, with regard to levels of general learning disability, resources and suitability for such inclusion. We will provide a broad curriculum which focuses on the abilities and strengths of each child while supporting their areas of need.

**Application Procedure for Enrolment**

* Enrolment Application Forms for the Autism Classes will be accepted following the publication of the Admissions Notice each year. The closing date for submission of enrolment applications will be included in the Admissions Notice.
* 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 will be acknowledged within one week of the closing day for the submission of applications.
* Requests for Enrolment Application Forms for the Autism Class and queries regarding supporting documentation should be made to:

 The Principal, Callystown National school, Clogherhead, County Louth.

* Receipt of acknowledgement of a Callystown National School Autism Class 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 our Enrolment Policy.
* Each Enrolment Application **must** be accompanied by **all** of the following supporting documentation:
* The child must have a diagnosis of Autism / Autistic Spectrum Disorder made using the DSM-IV/V or ICD 10 by the psychologist or team.
* Copy of the child’s Birth Certificate.
* Proof of address of the child’s primary residence.
* A written psychological assessment /report (dated within the 24 months prior to the application being submitted) or a written report from a multi-disciplinary team must 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 on a child should be provided to the school for assessment by the Admissions Team.
* 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. In this regard it should be noted that the intellectual ability of the child will be taken into account when considering an application.
* The parents of the child must accept and agree to the school’s Code of Behaviour and the terms of the Admissions Policy.
* All applications received by the closing date will be considered by the Admissions Team. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered. The team will include the School Principal, Special Education Coordinator and Special Class Teachers. The Admissions Team may seek the advice of the school’s allocated NEPS psychologist and SENO (Special Educational Needs Organiser).

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 Autism Class
* Verify the class’s suitability in meeting the needs of the child
* Verify that there is a recommendation from a psychologist for 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
* Verify that the child has an intelligence score in the Average or Low Average range (a Full Scale Intelligence Quotient score of 75 or greater).
* Identify qualifying applicants with reference to these criteria.
* Prioritise each qualifying applicant with reference to selection criteria.
* To make a recommendation based on these findings to the Board of Management.

The Board of Management is responsible for and must respect the rights of the existing school community and in particular the children already enrolled. The Board of Management has the right to endorse or overrule any decision made by the Admissions Team. In particular, the Board of Management reserves the right to refuse enrolment if they believe the school cannot meet the needs of a particular child.

* In the event that the number of eligible applications is greater than the number of places, such places will be filled on review of Enrolment Applications received in the following order of priority:
* Children who are already in the school and wish to transfer to the class
* Siblings of children enrolled in the school.
* Children of school staff
* Children from the local area (as defined by the Parish Boundary of Clogherhead).
* Children in the surrounding parishes of Clogherhead.
* Children outside of these areas.
* Children appropriate in class age to children already enrolled.

In the event that the number of eligible pupils seeking enrollment in the Special Class from within any category exceeds the number of available places, then the school will offer places beginning with the eldest and proceeding in descending order of age until all remaining places have been allocated.

If two or more applicants are tied for the last remaining place in the class by virtue of shared birth, the place will be awarded to the oldest by virtue of the time of birth recorded on their birth certificate.

There is no exception in the case of twins being tied for one place in the Special Class as the DES has set the maximum number of pupils at 6.

* 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 of 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 April each year.
* Parents who are offered a place must complete and return the school’s Enrolment Registration Form within two weeks of the letter of offer to accept a placement. If the school does not receive the Registration Form within this two-week period, the place will be offered to the next child on the Placement List for that school 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 & Integration**

* After placement in the class, a relevant Individual Education Plan will be provided for each child. This plan will have an input from all parties involved with the education of the child. The Autism 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.
* Each child in the Autism Class will be assigned to an appropriate mainstream class for integration purposes provided that this is in the best interests 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 the child is ready for this step and has the necessary supports in place.
* A review will continuously take place to assess whether the child’s placement is appropriate. The review will be carried out by school staff with parental involvement. The outcome of the review will be examined by the Board of Management.
* In the event that a placement is inappropriate, the school will liaise with appropriate agencies in an effort to obtain a more suitable placement

**Conduct & 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 each child’s Individual Education 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 found for their child.

**Discharge from the Special Autism Class**

It is school policy that the year that the student turns 13 or has attended a school placement equivalent to 8 years will be their final year in Callystown National School.

The onus will be on the parents to negotiate the placement with a suitable secondary school. Callystown National School will facilitate all transfer of records/reports as well as assist with any information required with regards to the student and Callystown National School will be deemed to have authority to forward all relevant reports and assessments to the relevant secondary school unless specifically instructed in writing not to do so.

Discharge may also be recommended if, following psychological assessments and consultation with the parents/guardians, it is felt that the placement is no longer appropriate and does not 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.

**Review**

 This policy is subject to review by the Board of Management as required.

**Ratification & Communication**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Callystown National School at its meeting held on:

Signed: **Fr. Paul Byrne** Date: 22/01/2025

**Fr Paul Byrne PP**

Chairperson, Board of Management.