

Enrolment Policy to Scoil Mhuire Special Needs Facility November 2017

The Boards of Management of Scoil Mhuire Senior and Junior schools have set out this policy in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000 and the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.

The Special Needs facility was established under the auspices of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) *guidelines for autism* in schools. Scoil Mhuire Special Needs Facility [hereinafter referred to as “the SNF”] offers a specialised educational service to children who have been fully diagnosed with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

The offer of a place in the SNF and the continued provision of such a place from year to year shall be subject and conditional on compliance with:-

- (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 provided and available from year to year, and
- (e) the school’s enrolment and class placement policies.

Class Organisation and Integration

The SNF will be made up of two classes, one junior and one senior which will be integrated into Scoil Mhuire Junior and Scoil Mhuire Senior schools respectively.

Places will be allocated to a maximum of 6 children per class in accordance with DES Guidelines. For the avoidance of doubt, class sizes of 6 children is a maximum and the schools reserve the right to curtail class sizes to a lesser number where in their absolute discretion such a measure is in the best interests of the children attending the SNF and the wider school community

Each class will have one teacher and two SNAs, which will be provided equally from each school to the facility.

Admissions

Each application for enrolment will be processed by an admissions team, comprising the Principals of Scoil Mhuire Senior and Junior schools and the two teachers assigned to work in the facility, based on the criteria outlined below. Advice will be sought from relevant professionals pertinent to each individual application. Movement from 2nd class in the Junior school to 3rd class in the Senior school will follow standard enrolment procedure.

The final decision on admissions will be made by the relevant Board of Management.

Applications Procedure See Schools Enrolment Policies

Application forms can be collected and then returned to the Parish Office, Railway Rd. Newbridge. The SENO on behalf of the National Council for Special Educational Needs (NCSE) must approve placement in the SNF. Once this process has been completed the applicant will, subject to the conditions herein, be offered a place on the list of applicants to enrol. Applications for children with ASD [Autistic Spectrum Disorder] will only be processed having regard to diagnostic, psychological and other relevant reports.

Criteria for Enrolment

In order for a child to be accepted into the SNF, the following minimum criteria will be applied and supporting documentation must be supplied in order for an application for enrolment to be considered:

- The child must have a primary diagnosis of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder made using the DSM-V or ICD 10 by a professionally recognised clinical and psychological assessment procedure or a multi-disciplinary team.
- The application must include a recommendation from a suitably qualified professional for placement in an SNF attached to a mainstream school.
- The application must include a statement from a suitably qualified professional that the minimum level of cognitive functioning is a mild general learning disability
- All reports (clinical and psychological, OT, SLT, and relevant professional opinions from suitably qualified professionals) must be included with the application and must not be more than 2 years old. [Note: Multi-disciplinary reports are valuable to the school in preparing to meet the needs of the child].
- The child must be aged between 4-12 years of age and must be 4yrs of age on or before the 1st of September of the enrolling year. [Note : No child can be older than nine years during his/her last year in the Junior school (2nd class) and no older than thirteen years during his/her last year in the senior school (6th class)].
- The Junior room will only cater for children who are enrolled in Junior School. The Senior room will only cater for children who are enrolled in the Senior School.
- Priority will be given to pupils currently in mainstream classes in either school with a diagnosis of ASD and where a recent report recommends immediate placement in either room.
- Priority for admission to senior class shall be accorded to children in junior class who wish to continue attending Social Mhuire SNF.

In the event that the number of applicants satisfying the above criteria exceeds the number of places available in any one year please refer to the relevant school's enrolment policy

NOTE: Placement in either of the SNF classes is subject to yearly review.

If, prior to enrolment or after a review, it transpires that the schools cannot or are not meeting the required needs of the child for placement in the SNF , the child will not be enrolled in whichever school is applicable (Junior or Senior) for the following year and the following actions will be taken:

1. The school will notify in writing the parents of the rationale for the decision.
2. The school will notify in writing the relevant agencies such as Network Disability Team (NDT), Tusla, the NCSE and the DES of the decision and the requirements necessary for the school to meet the specific needs of the child.

If spaces become available they will be allocated as per waiting list. When the criteria are met an offer for placement may be made.

Offer of Placement

Final decisions in relation to applications for enrolment are made by the Board of Management of the relevant school which will have regard to the advice and/or the recommendations of the Admissions Team. A child will be offered a place in the SNF by the relevant Board of Management only if all of the admissions criteria described above are met and there is a place available and subject to the provisions on right of refusal set out below.

The BOM reserves the right to refuse enrolment to any student.

NOTE: An applicant who applies for and is not offered a place in the SNF has the right to appeal the decision under Section 29 of the Education Act on the official form provided by the Department of Education and Science. This appeal must be lodged within 42 days of receipt of the refusal from the school to enrol.

Discharge Policy

It is school policy to facilitate the discharge of pupils from the SNF once they have reached the age of 8 or 2nd class or twelve or 6th class in respective classes. Pupils who reach the age of eight/twelve after September 30th in any year will be permitted to complete that academic year. This results in a June discharge in the following year. No child can be older than nine/thirteen years during his or her last year in the respective SNF classes. Discharge may also occur after the yearly review, if the Admissions Team, after consideration of revised multidisciplinary professional reports are of the opinion that the placement no longer fulfils the enrolment criteria. If the Admissions Team make such a decision parents/guardians will be consulted and informed that the Board of Management is to make such a decision. Discharge from the facility may also occur if a pupil is fully integrated into the mainstream school. The decision of the BOM in relation to such discharge shall be final and binding on all parties.

Multi Disciplinary support

Services essential to the needs of the child such as psychology, speech and language therapy; occupational therapy; behaviour therapy, sensory activities and other potential supports will be sought from whatever outside agency can provide them. The BOM reserves the right to contact any such agency when seeking to meet the needs of a child in the school.

Where the relevant outside support agencies provides services the staff will be accountable to the school principal for the day to day activities regarding the school activities. Their employee rights and responsibilities are under the jurisdiction of the agency and the BOM does not have responsibility in this regard.

Class placement

The child will be allocated to a mainstream class based on their chronological age, for integration purposes when accepted to the SNF.

The school promotes the policy of meaningful integration with age appropriate peers on a social level and according to the ability of the pupil for curriculum.

Social Integration

The child's level of integration into a class will be on an individual basis only and will differ from child to child.

A maximum of two pupils with ASD will be placed in any single mainstream class. A child from the SNF will only partake in general class learning when he/she shows the capacities to:

- enter a class without trepidation
- sit at a designated seat
- interact on a social level with the children nearest them
- have lunch with the whole class
- act on general teacher instructions

Curricular Integration: Assuming an appropriate level of social integration the child will on a phased basis be introduced to areas of the curriculum appropriate to his or her ability level. The arts, music and PE will be priority areas for integration of children.

The level of integration will be collectively decided upon by those professionals who deal with the child each day i.e. teachers (special education teachers and mainstream), the principal and support staff. The extent of integration into a mainstream class for core curricular areas will be based on each child's needs and capabilities.

Children may be integrated into a support group for core curricular areas if this is the most appropriate setting to meet the child's needs and that of the group.

Reverse Integration:

The policy of reverse integration extends to all classes. It involves a child with ASD working with a group of children from a mainstream class that are withdrawn to join the child with ASD in their own learning environment. The Principal in collaboration with those personnel who work with the child retain discretion in regard to what children are integrated and the extent of that integration.

Behaviour

Taking cognisance of Section 2 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (EPSEN), it is accepted that children with ASD may display challenging, defiant or oppositional behaviours. All efforts will be made by the school to manage such behaviours using a variety of strategies. Parents are expected to cooperate with this. Where a child's behaviour impacts in a negative way on other children to the extent that the constitutional right of the other children to an education is being prejudiced and/or interfered with to a significant extent as determined by the BOM of the school, the school reserves the right to advise the parents that a more suitable setting should be found for their child. If the parents thereafter do not seek to find a more suitable setting for their child the issue will be referred to the BOM to determine whether the school withdraws the place previously allocated to the child.

Children enrolled in our SNF classes are, in so far as appropriate to their level of ASD, required to cooperate with and support the school's Behaviour Management and Anti Bullying Policy as well as other policies on curriculum, organisation and management. The same support is expected from parents. The BOM places responsibility on parents to ensure that their child cooperates with all school policies.

Staff development

The BOMs are committed to implementing development for staff as needs arise and according to the resources that can be made available.

Evaluation

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

Approved by Boards of Management on 17/01/2018

Signed: _____

Eileen Hall
Chairperson BOM
Scoil Mhuire JNS

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