Enrolment Policy – Special Education Class

September 2020

Policy Document

Belclare National School

Special Classes for Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

General Introduction:

The Board of Management of S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa 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, and that furthermore, the chairperson of the Board, and the Principal Teacher will also be so assisted. The Archbishop of Tuam is the patron of the school.

S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa is a mainstream, co-educational primary school which caters for pupils from Junior Infants to 6th class. The special class for pupils with ASD was established in August 2020. The maximum class size is six pupils. The class has one full-time teacher and one SNAs, when full. If the class size is less than six pupils, SNAs are appointed on a pro-rata basis. Children are eligible to attend a Primary Class in the S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa Special Class for Children with Autism between the ages of four and twelve years only.

Taking into account the regulations and programmes of the Department of Education & Skills, the rights of the Patron as set out in the Education Act 1998, and the funding available, S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa supports the principles of:

- Inclusiveness, particularly with reference to the enrolment of children with a disability or other special educational need.
- Equality of access and participation in the school.
- Parental choice in relation to enrolment.
- Respect for diversity of values and beliefs.
- Traditions, languages and ways of life in society.

The Board of Management will not refuse a child on the basis of ethnicity, disability (i.e. severity of ASD), Traveller status, refugee status, political beliefs or family or social circumstances, provided they fulfil the enrolment criteria. Fulfilling the enrolment criteria does not necessarily ensure enrolment if:

- Sufficient classroom space is not available.
- Necessary resources pertaining to the enrolment are not available.

Taking all of the above into account the Board of Management reserves the right of admission.

Aims

In our Special Class we strive to provide a high quality and positive educational experience for our pupils, including access to a wide-ranging curriculum that is relevant and appropriate to their needs, within the requirements of all recent legislation and national guidelines pertaining to Special Educational Needs (SEN). We work to ensure that each pupil develops to his/her potential in an environment that offers clarity, predictability and calm. We work to enhance the pupils' communicative and social skills. In providing an autism specific learning environment within a mainstream primary school, we aim to facilitate meaningful inclusion in the school community, having regard for levels of disability, available resources and suitability for such integration. We consistently acknowledge and respect the role of the Parent/Guardian as the child's natural and primary educator.

Registration of interest to apply for enrolment

The registration process begins with a referral from the Autism Team, Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) or a telephone call or visit from the Parents/Guardians. The following information will be noted in the registration record:
1. Date of registration.
2. Name and date of birth of the child.
3. Address and telephone number of the Parents/Guardians.

Note: Registrations will only be progressed following receipt of the required professional report(s) as referred to in points 3 and 4 of the application to enrol procedure. If the school does not receive this documentation with the Pre-enrolment Application form, the application will not be processed or considered by the school. It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that all supporting documentation is correct and is received by the school.

Application to Enrol & Enrolment Criteria

Parents/Guardians seeking to enrol their child in the S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa Special Class are required to adhere to the following enrolment criteria:
1. Complete and submit a Pre-Enrolment form which is available upon request from the principal.
2. Provide an original Birth Certificate for the child, a photocopy of which will be retained by the school.
3. Provide a diagnostic report prepared by a Psychologist, Psychiatrist or Multi-Disciplinary Team within the last 2 years that has assessed and classified the child as having autism or autism spectrum disorder using the DSM-V or ICD 10, including a recommendation that a special class placement in a mainstream school is both necessary and suitable for the child.
4. Provide all other reports in operation for the child, e.g. occupational therapy report, speech and language report etc.

The closing date for the submission of Applications to enrol is 30th April each year for entry to the Special Class in August/September of that same year. Applications to enrol made after the 30th April will be considered, if all places for August/September are not already allocated.

A completed application to enrol form is an expression of interest by a Parent/Guardian in enrolling their child in the Special Class and is not an offer of a special class place.

Enrolment Criteria/Decision Making:

Each Application to Enrol will be considered by the Admissions Team. The team will include the Chairperson, the Principal and a member of the school's Special Education Team. The team will consult with the SENO and/or National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Psychologist as appropriate. A recommendation will be made by the Admissions Team to the Board of Management in relation to each application to enrol. Decisions in relation to all applications for enrolment are made by the Board of Management.

The maximum Special Class size is six pupils. Where the number of children on the waiting list of applicants exceeds the number of places available, the following criteria will apply in priority order:

1. Brothers and sisters of existing pupils – priority to the oldest .
2. Children living within the parish – priority to the oldest
3. Children from within the Galway area– priority to the oldest
4. If spaces are still available, places will be allocated as per waiting list, once an assessment has been made by the Admissions team

Unsuccessful applicants will be informed of the Board's decision in writing. Their name(s) will be placed on a waiting list, in accordance with the above criteria for places that may become available.

The Parents/Guardians of an unsuccessful applicant have a statutory entitlement under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998, as amended, to appeal the decision of the Board of Management to the Secretary General of the Department of Education & Skills. The appeal must be lodged within 42 days of receipt from the school of the refusal to enrol.

Offer & Acceptance of a Place

A letter of offer of a place in a special class in the Special Class will be sent within four weeks of the final closing date for applications. The letter of offer includes an acceptance form which must be returned within 14 days of the letter of offer being issued by the school. The acceptance form must be accompanied by a signed acceptance of S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa. Code of Behaviour in accordance with Section 24(4) of the Education Welfare Act, 2000. If the school does not receive the acceptance form within the 14 day period, the place will be offered to the next child on the waiting list for that school year.

Following Acceptance of a Place

Following receipt of the completed acceptance form:
1. The Parents/Guardians of the child being offered a place in the Special Class will be invited to visit the school to meet with the Principal and a member of the Special Education Team.
2. The Parents/Guardians may be requested by the school to consent to a visit by school staff to the child's pre-school/school/home setting to observe the child.
3. The Parents/Guardians will be invited to come with their child to visit S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa to meet with school staff and see their classroom.

4. The child may be phased in gradually to the special class through a mutually agreed process between the school and the Parents/Guardians of the child. In order for the child to get the best possible start in their class, the duration of the child's school day may vary depending on his/her needs.
5. The first year will be used to assess the child's individual needs, develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to address their identified needs, and assess whether the pupil's placement is appropriate.

Monitoring and Review

S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa reserves the right to review a pupil's progress from time to time, whether during or after each school year, to determine whether the special class placement is an appropriate placement for the pupil.

Transition from the Special Class to a Mainstream Class within S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa

Transition from the Special Class to a mainstream class, within S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa, may happen before the child has completed the 8 year cycle. This may happen when the school authorities assess that the child's educational needs can be met adequately in a mainstream setting and that the child will no longer benefit from the specialist support and individual programmes which they have heretofore received in the Special Class setting. The school Principal allocates a class to each pupil which will best meet the child's educational needs. This decision regarding placement is made in consultation with the educational staff, parents/guardians and will consider the reports/assessments of other outside agencies.

Behaviour

It is acknowledged by S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa. that a minority of pupils with special educational needs may display challenging and/or violent behaviour. S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa. has a duty of care to all its pupils and staff. Our management of challenging and/or violent behaviour is consistent with each pupil's right to be treated with dignity and to be free of abuse. All efforts will be made by school staff to prevent, manage and reduce challenging and/or violent behaviours through positive pupil/teacher/SNA relationships, the use of available therapeutic interventions and the implementation of behaviour plans as part of the pupil's IEP. All pupils are subject to the Code of Behaviour and Safety Statement of S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa. Where a pupil's behaviour impacts in a negative way on the other pupils in the special class or on pupils in their integration (mainstream) class to the extent that their right to an education is being interfered with, as judged by the Board of Management, the school reserves the right to advise parents that a more suitable setting should be found for their child.

Placement Review

Occasionally, concern regarding the suitability of a pupil's continued attendance at S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa. may arise. In such circumstances, a review of the school's ability to continue to meet the pupil's needs, including their safety needs and the safety needs of others, may be necessary. Any such review will be undertaken by a committee appointed by the Board of Management, in conjunction with the Principal and other relevant school staff. Parents/Guardians will be kept informed of any concerns that might arise in relation to their child's continued attendance at S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa. at the earliest opportunity. Parents/Guardians will also be given an opportunity to engage in the discussion surrounding the placement and concerns that arise from the case itself. In the event that it is determined that the pupil is not suitably placed in S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa having regard for the realistic service options available at the time, the Board of Management may request a multi-disciplinary team assessment be carried out to determine the best options for the specific pupil.

Refusal to Enrol or Decision to Exclude in Exceptional Circumstances.

The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse enrolment or to decide to exclude a pupil in exceptional circumstances where a) a child has special needs that, even with additional resources available from the Department of Education & Skills and/or the Department of Health, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the pupil with an appropriate education and b)

in the opinion of the Board of Management, a child poses an unacceptable risk to other pupils, school staff and/or school property.

Support by Outside Agencies

Every effort will be made by S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa to ensure that pupils in the Special Class are referred to outside agencies, such as the Health Service Executive (HSE), for essential services based on their needs, e.g. occupational therapy, speech and language therapy etc. and will accommodate the provision of such services in the school. Parents/Guardians should also note that a guarantee of support from such outside agencies cannot be guaranteed by S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa and that Parents/Guardians should ensure they avail of all such possible services for their child.

Discharge policy

It is policy of S.N. to facilitate the discharge of pupils from the Special Class once they have reached the age of twelve. Pupils who reach the age of twelve after 30th September in any year will be permitted to complete that academic year.
Discharge may also be recommended after the first year in the Special Class if the Admissions Team, after consultation with the Parents/Guardians, is of the view that the special class placement is not appropriate.
Discharge from the Special Class may also happen if a pupil is fully integrated into the mainstream school. Comprehensive transition planning processes will be put in place by S.N. An Croí Ró Naofa to facilitate a pupil's discharge from the Special Class and their integration into their new educational setting.

Implementation and review:

The Board will continue to monitor all aspects of this policy and the policy will be amended and updated annually. This Policy is valid for enrolments for the 2019/2020 school year.

Signed : ***Richard Broderick***
Chairperson, Board of Management