



## **St. John the Apostle N. S. Autism Class: Guidance Policy**

*This document has been developed by St John the Apostle, Knocknacarra National School to help members of our school community, including teachers, SNAs(Special Needs Assistants), parents and guardians, to understand the environment and approaches that are promoted in our Special Class for Autism.*

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### **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT AND RATIONALE**

The decision to provide a Special Class for Autism in St John the Apostle NS was taken by the Board of Management, in conjunction with the principal, staff and school community in the school year 2023/2024. The decision was made with a view to providing an appropriate, specialist education within a mainstream setting for children with a diagnosis of Autism and who meet the enrolment criteria. Our Special Class for Autism opened in September 2024. This policy was formulated in order to clarify the roles and responsibilities of staff in the provision of this specialised education.

In formulating this policy, we consulted the following documents:

- NCSE Guidelines for Setting Up and Organising Special Classes
- NCSE: An Evaluation of Education Provision for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Ireland (2016)

## **RELATIONSHIP TO ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL**

According to the NCSE,

*‘Special Classes are part of a continuum of educational provision that enables students with more complex special educational needs to be educated, in smaller class groups, within their local mainstream schools. They offer a supportive learning environment to students who are unable to access the curriculum in a mainstream class, even with support, for most or all of their school day.’*

Our decision to open a Special Class for Autism reflects our school aim/mission “to enable children to develop to their full potential physically, intellectually, linguistically, emotionally and socially through a child centred curriculum”.

Our Special Class for Autism reflects the inclusive and equality-based principles of the Catholic Ethos of St John the Apostle, Knocknacarra NS. and our commitment to ensuring all students are treated with dignity and respect at all times.

## **AIMS OF THIS POLICY**

- To outline the roles and responsibilities of the principal, Autism class teachers, mainstream class teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)
- To provide guidelines on the development of a suitable, positive learning environment, including the appropriate use of language.
- To outline approaches to integration and inclusion for children in the Special Classes.
- To outline approaches to teaching and learning.
- To outline planning and paperwork requirements.
- To encourage participation in Autism-specific Continued Professional Development (CPD) in order to enrich teaching and learning in the Special Classes.
- To establish the link between the Code of Behaviour and class for children with Autism

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Below is an overview of the roles and responsibilities of staff working with the children in the Autism class. Further detail is provided on some of these points in subsequent sections of this policy.

<b>School Management</b>	<b>Autism Class teacher</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of this policy in co-operation with the BOM, teachers, parents and children</li> <li>• Staffing arrangements, i.e. SNA supports, teachers, substitutes, bus escorts</li> <li>• Uphold the Code of Behaviour of the school</li> <li>• Management of the enrolment process</li> <li>• Support teachers to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of Autism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being the main point of contact for the child’s parents/guardians</li> <li>• Developing a suitable classroom environment</li> <li>• Coordinating and implementing education and behaviour plans</li> <li>• Communicating plans and strategies to SNAs and other relevant staff</li> <li>• Fulfilling planning and paperwork requirements</li> <li>• Co-ordinating the supporting work of the SNAs on an ongoing basis</li> <li>• Working with mainstream teachers to identify opportunities for meaningful integration and necessary accommodations</li> <li>• Upholding the Code of Behaviour</li> </ul>
<b>Mainstream Class Teacher</b>	<b>SNAs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with the Autism-class teacher to identify regular opportunities for integration or reverse integration, where appropriate</li> <li>• Working with the Autism-class teacher and SNAs to implement accommodations that the child with Autism may need to be successful in the mainstream classroom, where appropriate</li> <li>• Being aware of children’s learning targets during integration and using appropriate strategies and methodologies, as guided by the Autism class teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assisting with the care/safety/ supervision needs of the children – in the classrooms and around the school, on the playground and on school trips</li> <li>• Assisting with behavioural management programmes</li> <li>• Guiding the child through tasks and activities designed by the Autism-class teacher or the mainstream class teacher</li> <li>• Data collection/reporting on progress as determined by the Autism-class teacher or Principal</li> <li>• Preparing materials/resources for the children, under the guidance of the Autism- class teacher</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Providing input, where appropriate, during the review stages of the IEPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Providing input during the review stages of the IEPs and attending IEP review meetings</li> </ul>
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## **CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**

Children with Autism often experience difficulty with sensory information in the environment. The Autism specific class should be adapted to provide a calm, consistent environment in order to minimise distractions and support effective learning. Classroom adaptations should reflect the needs of the children. Staff should engage in a continuous process of reflection and the classroom environment may need to be altered throughout the year to better suit the needs of the children.

### **Adaptations to the classroom environment should include:**

#### **Minimal visual information on the walls**

Reduced displays of posters, children's work or other distracting visual information.

#### **Toys and preferred items in closed cupboards or on high shelves**

Increased motivation to request preferred items appropriately at specific times.

#### **Minimal use of language by staff**

- Short, clear and unambiguous instructions. Be conscious of how many keywords a child can process and remember.
- Use of visuals to give instructions when possible.
- One person giving instructions at a time.
- Speak in quiet and calm tones.
- Instructions stated clearly in the positive to tell the child what you want them to do, e.g. 'Hands down' instead of 'No pushing'
- Extended response-time for verbal instructions before repeating instruction (e.g. 15 seconds)
- Minimal talk between staff.

#### **Clutter kept to a minimum**

Clear countertops and tables to reduce visual distractions.

#### **Individual TEACCH workstations for children as required:**

- Dividers to reduce visual distractions.
- Use of a visual work system to indicate how many tasks to complete.
- Tasks prepared on the left-hand side, finished box on the right.
- Promote skills of independence – staff can supervise children at TEACCH stations but not interact with children or help them with tasks. Tasks should be pre-taught at a teaching table so children are capable of completing independently.
- Visually structured tasks with clear end point.

**Clear learning areas**, e.g. teaching table, group table, play area, etc.

- Visual information in the learning area to indicate expected behaviours.
- Learning areas labelled to correspond with labels on visual schedules.
- Materials organised with distracting items removed.

**Use of visual schedules:**

- Individualised schedules to indicate WHERE to go, i.e. which learning area to go to, not WHAT to do.
- Schedule structured to reflect the learning needs of the child e.g. pictures, words or objects may be used; reduced visual information as necessary.

**Availability and use of sensory resources as needed**, e.g. Move n' Sit cushion, theraband, fidget toys, ear defenders, chewy tubes, etc. The use of sensory resources should be discussed with parents, and where possible, with external professionals.

**Guidelines for staff/visitors:** display guidelines for staff or visitors are at the entrance of the classroom to ensure a respectful, consistent and calm environment is promoted at all times. This should also be included in the substitute folder.

## **APPROACHES TO TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The children will access an education based on the Primary School Curriculum, adapted according to their individual needs and capabilities through carefully planned differentiation and appropriate teaching methodologies.
- Subject areas include: English; Mathematics; Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE); Arts Education (Visual Arts, Music, Drama); Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE); Physical Education (PE) and Religious Education .
- The NCSE Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities may be used to augment the implementation of the curriculum.
- Autism-class teachers should incorporate children's interests into lesson content to enrich learning experiences.
- Learning should be meaningful so that children continue to make progress with their learning.
- Note: The Stay Safe Programme and the RSE programme are compulsory and must be delivered at an appropriately differentiated level each year as part of the school SPHE plan.
- Children who have a recommendation for a place in a Special Class for Autism do not necessarily qualify for an exemption from Gaeilge. An exemption must be recommended by a psychologist or a speech and language therapist. This exemption must be applied for through the principal of the school. It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure their child has the appropriate exemption, if necessary.
- An eclectic approach to teaching methodologies is used within the Special Class for Autism, that is, a range of approaches shall be employed, based on the individual

needs of the children. The main approaches include, but are not limited to: play-based learning, TEACCH, Intensive Interaction, Floor time, Social Stories, Sensory Integration and Attention Autism and PECS.

## **INTEGRATION / INCLUSION**

Children in the Special Class for Autism should have opportunities to learn alongside their typically developing peers in the mainstream classroom environment as much as possible.

- The nature of all integration should be determined by the Autism-class teacher based on the strengths and interests of the child, in consultation with the child's parents, the mainstream class teachers, SET'S and SNAs. All parties must be in agreement with the nature and extent of integration before proceeding.
- Integration should be meaningful for the child, i.e. there should be a clear goal which has been communicated to all staff involved.
- The length of time for which a child is integrated into mainstream is based on the individual needs of each child. Integration periods should be increased as the child meets previous goals. Integration should not be decreased without consulting parents and relevant staff.
- Appropriate supports should be put in place prior to integration into mainstream classes to promote positive and successful experiences for the child, e.g. support or training of mainstream teachers in relation to appropriate approaches (e.g. communication and behaviour management strategies), SET and SNA support, the use of appropriate visuals, environmental adaptations in the mainstream class if necessary.
- Fidgets toys and the Calming Corner will be available in all classrooms and SET rooms for all students to access.
- Each class level has access to sensory / movement hubs for all children to access throughout the day.
- Methods for communication between the Autism-class teacher and the mainstream teachers should be agreed, e.g. communication book/chart, drive folders, planning meetings.
- 'Reverse integration' will be put in place for children where integration in the mainstream setting is not appropriate. The focus of reverse integration will be on social skills and play skills only.
- Children will be included in whole-school events as much as possible, e.g. school assemblies, school tours, school performances, sports days, fund-raising activities, swimming lessons, etc. In specific cases, where stated in a child's Behaviour Plan, a child's parents may be asked to attend swimming lessons or outings outside of the school.
- Teachers should be mindful of the number of children integrated into a mainstream class at any one time, i.e. no more than 3 children per class at a time unless appropriate. Integration should not disrupt teaching and learning in the mainstream class.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Similar assessment requirements apply in the Special Class for Autism as in mainstream classes. Teachers are required to keep an Assessment Folder with information relating to the learning progress of the students in the curriculum subjects that they are accessing. There should be an additional focus, however, on children's language and communication, behaviour, social and emotional development, play, leisure skills, sensory differences and independence. The assessment process should constructively link with the individualised planning process.

Assessment strategies used may be similar to those that are employed in mainstream classes, where appropriate, e.g.

- Checklists
- Observation profiles
- Teacher designed tasks and tests
- Portfolio of work, work samples
- Autism-specific assessment and profiling tools are available for use in the Special Classes for Autism as required. These tools are useful for setting specific individualised targets for students' IEPs. Autism-specific assessment tools include:
  - Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLBS)
  - Verbal Behaviour Milestones Assessment and Placement Programme (VB-MAPP)
  - Psychoeducational Profile-Third Edition (PEP-3)
  - AET Progression Framework
- Note: Children in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class are not exempt from Standardised Testing without prior approval from the principal.

## **PLANNING FOR TRANSITION**

Children with Autism often have difficulty dealing with changes in their environment or routine. Autism-class teachers should plan carefully for transitions, in collaboration with the child's parents.

## **TRANSITIONS WITHIN THE SCHOOL DAY**

Daily transitions within the school day should be planned, predictable and calm, as much as possible. Unplanned changes to routines should be communicated calmly using visuals. The following strategies should be used to support transitions:

- Visual schedules or First/Then charts.
- Social stories (for introducing new routines, e.g. integration sessions).
- Visual timers or countdown to signal the change.
- Clear, unambiguous use of language.

### **Whole school staff will:**

Limit unnecessary conversation with staff and children on school transitions, a gesture / smile or wave is ample. If a child leads engagement staff will interact with children.

## **TRANSITIONING TO OUR AUTISM-SPECIFIC CLASS**

The following guidelines should be followed to help to prepare a child before transitioning to our Specific Class for Autism:

- Principal and/or Autism-class teacher to meet with the child's parents to discuss strengths, interests, sensory preferences, motivators, etc.
- Autism-class teacher will visit the child's previous setting (e.g. pre-school, crèche) to observe the child and liaise with staff in this setting.
- Autism-class teacher will access the child's professional reports and previous IEPs where possible.
- Autism Class teacher will provide the child's parents with a social story to include pictures of the school, the classroom and, where possible, the staff working in the class, the bus and the bus escort where applicable.
- School will invite the child and his/her parents for a visit to the class when other children are not there to allow him/her to explore the environment and meet the teacher and SNAs.
- The above information should be recorded, stored in the child's file and used to begin the child's individualised planning process.
- School will provide the parents with a transition schedule to outline the dates and times for which the child will attend for the first 3 weeks of school. This transition schedule should be approved by the principal or the SET coordinator before being shared with parents.
- Route maps and strategies will be clearly outlined and shared with whole school staff when children are moving within the school grounds for example; limit interactions between children and Autism staff, unless invited into the conversation / situation please respect children and staff space. There is a huge amount of planning and preparation for managing children as they move through the school.

## **TRANSITIONING FROM OUR AUTISM-SPECIFIC CLASS**

The following guidelines should be followed when a child is transferring from our Autism-specific class to a new setting:

- The Autism-class teacher should support the parents to schedule a visit to the new setting and to meet the child's new teacher, i.e. help the parents to make contact with the teacher, help parents to schedule a meeting.
- The Autism-class teacher should obtain photos of the new setting where possible in order to create a social story / photo book for the child. Details of new school routines and rules should also be included where possible.
- The Autism-class teacher should provide the new setting with an up-to-date copy of the child's Pupil Profile and IEP, with the parents' permission. This should include information on the child's strengths, interests, current level of performance across



curricular areas as well as social and behavioural learning areas. Information regarding effective strategies, resources and methodologies should be included.

## **PLANNING REQUIREMENTS**

The Autism-class teacher is responsible for meeting the following planning requirements:

- **Individual pupil profile:** The pupil's profile documents his or her current level of performance across learning areas, e.g. literacy, numeracy, language and communication, behaviour, emotional development, leisure skills, social interaction, play and independence skills. Information on effective teaching methodologies or learning style should also be included. A formal review of this profile should be coordinated by the class teacher for each child in collaboration with his/her parents each October and February.
- **Individual Education Plan (IEP):** Short-term SMART targets are reviewed and updated monthly, and shared with parents. Targets should be realistic so that progress can be observed from month to month. Targets should be included across different learning areas to promote social and emotional well-being, as well as academic learning.
- **Group Plan:** Short-term plan for thematic group activities, e.g. Story time, Maths Topic, SESE, SPHE, Social skills, PE, Arts, etc.
- **Cuntas Míosúil:**  
Progress review and evaluation of IEP targets, noting targets achieved. Progress review and reflection on monthly group plan.
- **Monthly Health and Safety Audit:** This should focus on behaviour concerns or medical conditions to ensure school management are informed. See [Appendix B Safety Audit Room 23 - Google Docs](#)

Depending on the needs of the children in the class, the class teacher may also be required to develop the following additional documents:

- **Behaviour Plan:** This may be required if specific behaviour management strategies and approaches need to be implemented with a child. The plan should be based on behaviour data collected regarding functions of behaviours and potential triggers. Strategies should be shared with all staff who work with a child so that they can be implemented consistently. See template in [Appendix A Behaviour Plan Autism Class - Google Docs](#)
- **Intense Behaviour Management Plan:** If/when a child's behaviour is a consistent risk to the teaching and learning of others and/or risk to the health and safety of other pupils/staff, the child may be placed on a Safety Specific Behaviour Plan. This plan is drafted in conjunction with NEPS, parents and BoM and is adapted to individual needs. It contains an emergency plan if/when an incident occurs.

- **Intimate Care Needs Plan:** This may be required if a child needs specific regular support or assistance with intimate care needs such as toileting. Staff may seek advice or support from external professionals as required. Please refer to the Intimate Care Needs Policy. [Appendix C Intimate Care Plan Autism Class - Google Docs](#)

**Substitute file:** Class teachers should develop a folder of work for substitute teachers to include the following:

- One-page summary of pupil needs
- Timetables
- One-page summary of strategies and approaches used in the class. This should be laminated and put on display for visitors to the class.
- Suitable work or work plans in the event of teacher's absence.

## **EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES**

### **INDIVIDUALISED EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES**

The children in the Specific Class for Autism will have access to equipment and resources which are recommended in their psychological reports, occupational therapy reports and speech and language reports, where possible. Where specific equipment is recommended for a particular child, the professional report may be forwarded to the NCSE for approval for funding. Weighted equipment, e.g. weighted vests, should not be used with a child unless recommended and tailored to the correct weight.

Resources such as theraputty, therabands, fine motor equipment and gross motor equipment will be, where possible, provided by the school.

### **SHARED RESOURCES**

Shared access to equipment and resources (e.g. gross motor equipment, toys, literacy and numeracy resources, sensory equipment, reference books) is available through the use of the shared storage spaces.

Equipment and resources should be replaced in the correct space when not in use for continued ease of access for other members of staff.

### **SHARED SPACES**

- Children in the Special Class for Autism will have access to the sensory garden, the Nurture Room, the hall and the yard.
- Use of these areas should be timetabled when possible to promote ease of access for other children and classes. However, there may be occasions when children need unplanned access to these rooms for calming purposes.
- Safety is of utmost importance when using these rooms and when using specialised equipment (e.g. weighted resources). Activities to be carried out in these rooms or using specialised equipment should be planned carefully by the class teacher according to each child's individual needs and sensory preferences. An OT may be consulted where possible. Children's behaviour should be monitored before and after using these rooms or equipment when new activities are introduced.
- Access to these shared spaces may be timetabled for children in mainstream classes as required.

## **CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

The school Code of Behaviour applies to all children in the school, including the children in the Special Class for Autism. It is accepted that children with Autism may display challenging, defiant or oppositional behaviour. All efforts will be made by the school to manage such behaviours according to specific strategies outlined in a child's behaviour plan.

#### **DAILY MANAGEMENT OF BEHAVIOUR**

- Staff should respond to behaviours calmly, according to the school's positive behaviour management approach
- Children should be treated with dignity and respect at all times. Children's behaviours should be redirected subtly and calmly by staff when in public.
- Incidences of behaviour should be consistently recorded by the Autism-class staff in an agreed format, e.g. behaviour tracking chart/Continuum of Support on Aladdin. . Behaviours should be analysed in order to identify the potential triggers or the functions of the behaviour.
- Serious behaviour should be recorded on Aladdin.
- If a child displays repeated and consistent negative behaviours, the information from these behaviour charts should be used to develop a behaviour plan, in collaboration and agreement with the parents of the child and supporting services, where possible. A behaviour plan should outline a clear behaviour goal, or 'desired replacement behaviour'. Staff should select appropriate intervention strategies based on the function of the child's behaviour. All staff working with this child should employ these strategies consistently.

#### **MANAGEMENT OF EXTREME SERIOUS BEHAVIOUR**

Autism-class staff should adapt the Emergency Safety Plan [Appendix D Emergency Behaviour Plan Autism Class - Google Docs](#) which outlines procedures to be followed in the incidence of an extreme challenging behaviour.

- Serious incidences of behaviour should be communicated immediately to the principal by phoning the school office. Serious incidences of behaviour may include a child's attempts to injure him or herself or attempts to injure another person.
- Where the behaviour of one child escalates to the extent that the safety of children or staff are at risk, all other children should be evacuated from the room.
- Restraint is not recommended. Staff should not attempt to move a child who is experiencing a serious behaviour tantrum or meltdown. Staff should remove any items which the child may use to hurt him or herself and supervise the child from a safe distance.
- If a child or staff member is seriously injured, staff should notify the office immediately and an ambulance or GP will be called, the principal informed and parents/guardians contacted. Staff may administer First Aid if needed.
- The injured staff member will be asked to complete an incident report which must be brought to BOM.
- All staff are informed and advised to always follow the Low Arousal Approach with all children in Room 23. [Appendix E The Low Arousal Approach - Google Docs](#)

- Where a child's behaviour impacts in a negative way on the education or safety of other children in the class, or on the safety of staff, sanctions may be applied as outlined in the school Code of Behaviour.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

- It is important that all pupils and staff are treated with dignity and respect at all times.
- Issues relating to the behaviours or care needs of the children should not be discussed by staff (teachers, SNAs, bus escorts) outside of the classroom.

## WELL-BEING

### PUPIL WELL-BEING

Children with Autism often experience difficulty recognising, verbalising and expressing their own emotions. As such, the following supports are put into place in the Autism-class in order to safeguard and foster the well-being of the children who attend:

- **Communication with parents:** Staff consistently monitor, observe and record the behaviours and moods of the children in the class. If concerns arise as to the well-being of one of the children, (e.g. low mood, poor eating or hygiene behaviours, consistent challenging behaviours), this will be discussed with parents and with available external professionals.
- **Calming activities:** Children will engage in calming activities and sensory regulation activities throughout the day, according to his or her needs. Children's sensory regulation is regularly monitored.
- **Promote positive relationships:** Children are encouraged and taught to develop positive relationships with one another and with staff through play-based activities, pair/group learning, integration, leisure time, etc. Relationship building is key.
- **S.P.H.E. curriculum:** Resilience skills and emotional awareness is taught through the S.P.H.E. curriculum. Teachers may employ differentiated strategies, e.g. social stories, sorting and matching tasks, visual communication systems.  
**Note:** Child Protection concerns should be reported to the DLP or DDLP, as per school policy.

### STAFF WELL-BEING

It is acknowledged that the Autism-class can often be a high-energy, busy environment for staff that work there. The following supports are in place to safeguard and foster staff well-being:

- **Team meetings:** Staff are encouraged to check in with one another informally at the end of each day to discuss the day, to complete observational notes and to plan for the following day. More formal planning meetings should take place as part of Croke Park hours each fortnight.
- **SEN coordinator:** Regular meetings with SEN coordinator to look at policy, procedure, staff wellbeing, systems et.
- **Breaks from the classroom:** If a staff member is hurt or injured in the classroom, he or she should use the Lámh Cúnta card, take a break from the class for a few minutes to go for a short walk, get a cup of tea or speak to the principal.
- **Staff buddy system:** Staff members are assigned a 'buddy' on staff who they can speak to when they are feeling stressed or upset. The SEN coordinator will

hold fortnightly meetings with the Autism class staff to kept abreast of all successes and challenges.

- **Breaktimes:** Inclusion in whole staff lunchtimes and general yard duty.
- **Communication systems:** Clear communication systems between CT's and Autism staff

### **Counselling and external supports:**

If staff would like to speak to someone external to the school, it is recommended that they call:

- The INTO 24 hour Counselling services for teachers Free Phone: 1800 411 057
- Employee Assistance Service- Spectrum Life- Wellbeing Together: Folláine le Chéile' Freephone: 1800 411 057  
Whatsapp: 087 369 0010
- The Forsa 24 hour Counselling Service for SNAs Free Phone 1800 776 655

### **COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS / GUARDIANS**

The staff of St John the Apostle NS recognise that the child's parents are the primary educators of the child. In order to promote a successful and positive school experience for the child, it is important that parents are actively involved in the child's education and are regularly informed on what is happening in class.

We support communication with parents in the following ways:

- **Communication journal:** Used by parents and teachers to inform one another of the child's mood before school and throughout the day, toileting, eating, independence and a short comment when relevant relating to other significant events.
- **Phone calls:** Parents should be phoned in the incidence of more serious behaviours
- **Meetings:** IEP meetings are scheduled twice per year; parent-teacher meetings are scheduled twice per year; further meetings are scheduled as required
- **Sharing documents:** Class teachers will print and share copies of monthly targets with parents. Parents will be provided with copies of Pupil Profiles and other relevant documents at IEP meetings.
- **Email / Aladdin:** Parents can contact class teachers by email or Aladdin alerts as required. Class teachers will respond to emails during his or her working hours.
- **Class web pages and Google Classroom:** Teachers share pictures and details of class activities and events.

### **HOME BASED SUMMER PROGRAMME / SCHOOL BASED SUMMER PROGRAMME**

Parents are entitled to apply for Home-Based Summer Provision / School Based Summer Programme depending on the individual needs of the child and staffing arrangements through the Department of Education and Skills (DES). Parents must find a suitable teacher /SNA to carry out the home based programme with their child and complete the application forms which are available from school. Staff will engage with families who have the option to apply for the Summer Programme run by school staff.

## **CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The BOM of St John the Apostle NS will support access to relevant CPD for school staff when appropriate. Specialist training will be accessed via the Special Education Support Service (SESS), NCSE and Middletown Centre for Autism by the teacher in the Autism Class. In-school training from previously trained staff is also encouraged.

Teachers who are interested in working in the Special Class for Autism will engage with some training and personal learning prior to placement in the class.

Staff who are working in the class should discuss and identify their learning needs in consultation with school management at least once per term and seek training opportunities.

Where possible, in-school training workshops will be organised and made available to all staff, i.e. teachers and SNAs in mainstream as well as in the Special Class.

The following SESS courses should be prioritised when making applications:

- NCSE
- TEACCH Autism Programme
- Accessing the curriculum for students with Autism
- An Introduction to Autism (Primary)

A list of all courses available from the SESS is available on the SESS website:

<https://www.sess.ie/sess-primary-courses>. Staff should request permission from the principal before applying for a course.

## **SUCCESS CRITERIA**

This policy will be seen to be working well when:

- We see happy children engaging in school life.
- We receive positive feedback from staff members and parents
- All staff are made aware of and are committed to the principals that are outlined in this policy
- A quality, positive educational service is provided to all children attending this class.
- All efforts are made to ensure the integration and inclusion of children in the Specific Class for Autism within the whole school context, with due regard for the level of needs of the child, available resources and suitability for integration.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

This policy will be implemented from 28th August 2024

## **REVIEW**

The policy will be reviewed and amended as necessary. The SEN coordinator will initiate and coordinate this review.

## **RATIFICATION & COMMUNICATION**

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management of St. John the Apostle, Knocknacarra NS on 9th October 2024 and subsequently communicated to the school community via the school's website.

**Michael Gallagher**  
**Chairperson,**  
**Board of Management**