



## Newtown National School

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# Autism Class Policy 2024/2025

## Introductory Statement

This class attempts to enable all students with ASD to belong to an educational community without prejudice and within which individual difference is celebrated. The class reflects the inclusive ethos of Newtown National School and wherever possible the students in the ASD Class are integrated/included within the mainstream school

## Rationale

Following advice from the SENO, the decision to provide a Special Class for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Newtown National School was taken by the Board of Management (BoM) of the school in conjunction with the principal, staff and school community in January 2021. This decision was made with a view to providing an appropriate, specialist education within a mainstream setting for children who want to attend our school. A second special ASD class was opened in September 2022.

## Aims and Objectives for our ASD Classes

- To provide a specialised education service for children who have been diagnosed with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- To create a supportive and caring environment for each pupil
- To enable each child to access the curriculum to the best of their ability
- To assist each child in attaining their individual educational potential
- To support each child in learning life and social skills to the best of their ability

## Guiding Principles

The Board of Management recognised that effective teaching in the ASD Unit is based on the following principles:

- Effective whole-school policies
- Provision of intensive early intervention
- Early detection
- Planning on an individualised basis focusing on the child's communication, social and behavioural needs
- Involvement of parents and others that are involved with the child's education
- Ensuring that all staff share information and are supportive

The Board supports the findings of the Task Force on Autism (2001) and believes that there is no single method that should be used exclusively to meet the varied needs of children and young people with ASDs, but rather a variety of best practice methods should be employed. To this end the following assessment and teaching resources may be used individually or combined to meet the needs of the child:

- PECS –Picture Exchange Communication System (Bondy and Frost, 1994)
- Intensive Interaction (Nind and Hewett, 1994)
- Social Stories (Carol Gray, 1994)
- Hanen Language and Communication
- Lámh – Sign Language



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- Social Skills
- PEP 3 – Psycho Educational Profile
- Contemporary ABA
- Sensory Integration (on the advice of an OT)
- TacPac
- Music Interaction
- ABLLS and VB MAPP
- TEACCH

### Specific Objectives of ASD Teaching

Through the implementation of this policy, we strive to:

- Develop positive self-esteem and a positive experience and attitude towards school and learning among pupils with ASD
- Facilitate pupils with ASD to participate to the best of their abilities in classroom and school life
- Ensure each child accesses the appropriate curriculum to the best of their abilities
- Improve pupils' social and life skills e.g. by encouraging and supporting pupils with ASD in developing their understanding of sharing, turn taking, transitioning from one activity to another, changing routines, waiting patiently and self-management of sensory and behavioural difficulties
- Help the child to communicate with others – adults and peers – either verbally or through the use of non-verbal communication strategies
- Promote collaboration with the teacher, parent and other professionals involved with the child's education.

### Records and Documentation

The compilation and filing of relevant documentation relating to the child is the responsibility of the teaching professional. Diagnostic assessment reports will be requested at time of enrolment. All such documents will be treated as confidential. Reports may be consulted by the Principal, SEN Team Members and the class teacher.

On receipt of such reports, the teaching professional is responsible for liaising with parents and other parties involved to review the child's needs and review the child's educational environment to assess if it is consistent with the best interests of the child. (EPSON 2004)

If the educational environment is deemed to be consistent with the best interests of the child, resources required to assist in meeting identified needs will be identified and the Principal and/or teaching professional will liaise with the SENO to ensure resources are made available to meet the child's needs.

ASD Class teachers are responsible for keeping their own records of work completed with the child.

In the case where the Class Teachers receive assessment reports or other formal assessments/reports from parents, they are responsible for recording the date received on the report and forwarding same to the Principal.



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### Creating Pupil Profiles

The following are used in creating profiles:

- Psychological Reports and other professional reports and assessments made available by parents
- Standardised norm referenced tests
- Criterion reference tests
- Formal Testing such as PEP-3 assessment, ABBLs / VB-MAPP
- Teacher Observation / Parents' Observation
- Teacher Informal Assessment e.g. Reinforcer Sampling , Early Skills Checklist and other teacher designed assessments

### Intimate Care

Children who have personal care needs are cared for by their SNA – see Intimate Care Policy

### Administration of Medicine

Procedures for the administration of medicines are outlined in our Administration of Medicines Policy

### Curriculum Planning

The Primary School Curriculum is used with objectives delivered as appropriate in line with the Curriculum Guidelines for Children with Learning Difficulties ( Mild, Moderate, Severe and Profound).

### Individual Support Plans

The teaching professional has responsibility for ensuring all pupils with ASD attending Newtown National School have individualised student support plans. The purpose of this is to:

- Support access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- Provide structure
- Provide for a continuum of support
- Ensure records are kept
- Identify student progress at a level commensurate with ability (SESS, 2011)

In formulating a support plans, ASD Class Teachers will organise meetings to consult and seek input from parents, other relevant teachers and other professionals involved with the child. Meetings will be arranged in the first term (mid-late October) to agree goals and set targets for teaching and learning and a subsequent review meeting will take place in the last term to review progress and if necessary, to suggest goals for the following year. If the IEP process identifies resources over and above those normally available in the school, the Principal will bring this to the attention of the SENO and request same.

A Support Plan will contain the following information:

- Assessment of pupil's current level of educational performance
- Pupil's abilities, strengths and needs
- Pupil's priority learning needs
- Learning targets
- Resources and personnel involved
- Strategies for implementation of the plan
- Time-frame and review date



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The IEP will be signed by the ASD Class Teacher, Parents and other professionals involved. A copy of targets will be given to the child's parents. The ASD Teacher will implement the plan in collaboration with parents, other professionals working with the child and SNA, as appropriate.

### Communication Strategies

- Parents and other professionals involved with the child will be invited to a meeting and their views and opinions will inform the formulation of the child's support plan.
- Parents will be informed if the ASD Class Teacher has any concerns regarding progress in accessing the curriculum and/ or implementing the agreed plan
- Parents will be informed if the priority goals need to change
- Ongoing informal communication will occur between the ASD Class teacher and SNAs and more formal communication with other relevant members of the SEN Team will occur
- Regular communication between the ASD Class Teacher and parents through use of communication diary, e-mail and photos sent via school email and or via office messaging service.

### Physical Intervention with Pupils

Staff will refer to the school physical intervention policy. In a special class some physical contact with pupils may be necessary for children's safety and welfare. Examples may include:

- Leading a pupil by the hand or arm
- Shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
- Leading a pupil back to the correct learning space if they have run away

### Implementation of Integration/Inclusion

As outlined in the SERC Report (2003:142) "no one type of educational provision will meet the needs of all children with autism. There is a continuum of special educational needs which is best served by a corresponding range of educational provisions. Some of this is best organised within the ordinary school while other needs are more appropriately met within a more specialised setting."

In some circumstances, the SEN Team may be of the opinion that a pupil attending ASD classes is making sufficient progress to warrant reassessment by the psychologist in relation to his/her educational placement. Under these circumstances, parents are advised to seek a review assessment. If parents and SEN team agree, pupils may be included in mainstream classes for short periods for activities deemed most suitable by the SEN Team for the individual child in co-ordination with the mainstream class teacher. This practice seeks to promote social interaction with larger groups of children/peers and provides an opportunity to observe and assess the child's ability to cope in a larger setting. Inclusion/Integration will be done following Covid guidelines in mind.

The school promotes integration of ASD pupils with mainstream peers on:

- A. an age appropriate basis for social skills learning, and
- B. an ability appropriate basis for curricular learning.

Similar to educational provision, no one type of social or curricular integration will meet the needs of all children with autism. There is a continuum of social and curricular needs which is best served by a corresponding range of integration provisions. Some of this is best organised within the more specialised setting and some can occur in the regular class setting. The nature, type and amount of integration that each child will engage with will be determined by the professionals who work with the child within the school i.e. pre-school and/or special class teacher and other SEN Team Members as may



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be relevant, support staff, mainstream class teachers and the Principal. While the views of other interested and involved parties such as parents, psychologists, special educational needs organiser, speech therapists and occupational therapists will be taken into account, the decision rests with the teaching staff and will be made in the best interest of the child given their abilities and capabilities as evidenced in the school environment.

Initial integration into a regular mainstream class setting is on a social basis only and occurs if it is felt it is in the best interest of the child and that the child can cope with the change to his/her schedule. The pupil attending the ASD classes will only partake in structured play activities initially, they will not partake in general class learning. The focus of the integration time will be on developing social skills, for example:

- Play skills
- Interest in other children
- Ability to initiate communication with peers
- Communication skills
- Listening skills
- Ability to tolerate proximity of others
- Confidence and self-esteem in larger group settings
- Skills to attract adult attention in a manner appropriate to the school setting
- Skills to communicate their needs to a class teacher
- Skills to respond appropriately by other children
- Turn taking skills
- Ability to share
- Ability to sit in a seat for a period of time
- Ability to engage with simple games
- Ability to understand and adhere to basic classroom rules

A child will not be considered for curricular integration until he/she can complete the following mainstream integration checklist:

### *Language Skills*

- Communicates needs and desires
- Answers simple questions
- Asks simple questions
- Engages in simple exchanges of conversation
- Recalls Experience

### *Social Skills*

- Takes turns during activities
- Waits quietly
- Reciprocates greetings from peers and adults
- Participates in circle activities
- Initiates play activities with peers with or without adult prompts
- Imitates peer play



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### Academic Skills

- Learns through observation of others
- Completes seat work independently
- Raises hand to seek adult assistance
- Learns targeted objectives during group instruction
- Completes class level academic curricula
- Remaining in class for at least 20 minutes without trepidation
- Listening and engaging with activities appropriately

### Behaviour Skills

- Responds to delayed contingencies
- Exhibits disruptive behaviours at near zero levels in all environments
- Confidence and self-esteem in larger group settings
- Adheres to basic classroom rules

When the child has displayed competence in the above skills, then curricular or 'work' related integration, if appropriate, may be considered. This will only be offered to children who have adjusted well on a social and behavioural level to the regular mainstream class setting during play time. The decision to introduce curricular integration will be made by the teaching professionals in consultation with parents. If a decision is taken to commence curricular integration, children may be introduced to areas of the curriculum, in the regular class setting, **at a level appropriate to their individual abilities.**

The children attending the ASD classes will be given an opportunity to participate in general school activities i.e. school sports' day, school trips, Green Flag Day, special events/activities in the school, if such activities are deemed to be within the child's coping abilities. If it is felt that activities will cause distress, the child will not be required to participate.

## Parents

Parents have a role in ensuring that:

- They fulfil the expectations of parents outlined in our school's Code of Behaviour
- Ensuring they understand the different levels of integration and rationale for these within our school
- Understanding that all children attending Newtown N.S. are attending a regular mainstream school
- Understanding that all children attending primary school follow the Primary School Curriculum but for children with special educational needs, including children with autism, follow the curriculum at their own level of ability, This may require teachers to adapt the curriculum teaching as per NCCA Guidelines.
- Understanding that all children attending ASD classes are not automatically integrated to regular mainstream classes for social and/or curricular learning
- Understanding that every effort will be made to accommodate their views and wishes with respect to social and curricular integration but that the final decision rests with the Principal and the teaching staff and is based on their child's daily school experience.
- Ensuring their child's belongings are clearly labelled.
- Ensuring their child attends punctually in school uniform



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- Ensuring their child has a healthy lunch in school everyday in line with the whole school policy on 'Healthy Eating'.
- Communicating with staff with courtesy and respect.

### Monitoring and Review

The Board of Management reserves the right to review and amend the contents of this policy as may be deemed necessary and appropriate.

Ratified by the Board of Management on 3rd September 2024

Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_