

## **Scoil Fhionáin 17704H**

### **Class for Pupils with Autism needs**



The Board of Management of Scoil Fhionáin, in conjunction with the Principal and Staff, were delighted to open a class for children with autism, based on emerging needs in the school community, as reported by the Special Educational Needs Officer of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). Scoil Fhionáin is proud to have opened its first class for children with autism needs, in September 2020, supported by the NCSE, with permission in principle given to open a second class as the need arises. The view of this class is to provide an education in a mainstream setting for children who have a diagnosis of autism, for whom an autism class placement is recommended, and who fulfil the enrolment criteria. The class primarily caters for children resident in the Scoil Fhionáin catchment area.

This policy is a subsidiary of Scoil Fhionáin's Admission and Participation Policy, and procedures and guidelines from same will be implemented. Scoil Fhionáin's annual Admissions Notice will be published on school website in February annually, and enrolment notification will be published in local and parish newsletters, as well as in the Donegal News, in January annually.

Scoil Fhionáin is an inclusive, mainstream co-educational primary school with administrative principal, seven mainstream teachers, two SET teachers, one shared Múinteoir Gaeilge and additional SET hours which are shared by teachers from two other schools. Scoil Fhionáin's ethos is Catholic, and is under the patronage of the Bishop of Raphoe, Bishop Alan Mc Guckian.

The Autism needs class at Scoil Fhionáin is a class for children with autism for whom for a placement in an autism class in a mainstream primary school has been recommended, and who have the potential to integrate into a mainstream, age appropriate class. All placements will be reviewed annually in order to ensure that the placement continues to be appropriate for each child. The maximum class size is 6 pupils. Access to speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy etc. will be dependent on local H.S.E. services.

The child's participation in Autism class, and associated inclusion in mainstream classes, where appropriate, will be kept under review by school management, in consultation with parents/guardians, and HSE/NCSE/NEPS professionals. The school reserves the right to advise parents/guardians that a more suitable setting should be found for the pupil, following consultation.

#### **Our Aims**

We aim to offer a positive meaningful educational and inclusive experience, which allows the child to develop to his/her full learning potential in an environment that offers clarity, predictability and calm.

Our ASD class offers an autism specific learning environment within a mainstream, inclusive, 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 wish to provide a broad curriculum which focuses on the abilities and strengths of each child while supporting their areas of need.

### **Application Procedure for Enrolment**

1. Enrolment Application Forms for the ASD Class will be accepted until the closing date for submission of enrolment applications which is mid February annually. 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. Please note that this “waiting list” only applies for the enrolment year concerned, and a new application will be required for a subsequent year. Applications received on or before this date will be acknowledged within one calendar month of the closing day for the submission of applications. Scoil Fhionáin caters for children of primary school going age. i.e. 4-12 years, with the pupil being no older than 13 years on leaving school. Scoil Fhionáin reserves the right to advise parents/guardians that a more suitable school placement is advisable for their child, following advice/recommendation of NCSE/Early Intervention Team, HSE.

Requests for Enrolment Application Forms for the Autism Class and queries regarding supporting documentation should be made to: Principal, Scoil Fhionáin, Falcarragh, Co Donegal Telephone: 074-9135122 [scoilfhionain.anfalcarrach@gmail.com](mailto:scoilfhionain.anfalcarrach@gmail.com)

*Receipt of acknowledgement of an enrolment application by the school does not constitute an offer of a place nor does it not 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.*

The Enrolment Application must be accompanied by all of the following supporting documentation supplied by parents:

- The child must have a diagnosis of Autism / Autistic Spectrum Disorder by the psychologist or Early Intervention Team. It must be stated that enrolment in an autism class is the only recommended placement for the child.
- Original birth certificate.
- A written psychological assessment /report (dated within the six 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 academic ability of the child will be taken into account when considering an application and will be subject to continuous assessment and review.

2. All applications received by the closing date will be considered by the our team which will include the School Principal, SET teachers and Special Class Teacher. The Admissions Team may seek the advice of the school's allocated NEPS psychologist and/or SENO. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

The function of the admissions teams 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
- Identify qualifying applicants with reference to these criteria.
- Prioritize each qualifying applicant with reference to selection criteria (Point 3 below)
- 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.*

3. In the event that the number of children that apply for a place is greater than the number of places, such places will be filled on review of Enrolment Applications received in the following order of priority:
  - A. Siblings of current pupils of the school
  - B. Children of current school staff
  - C. Children living within Scoil Fhionáin, Falcarragh catchment area; Proof of address may be required.
  - D. Children living outside parish of Naomh Fionán , Falcarragh

In the event of the number of children in any category exceeds the number of places available, qualifying applicants will be offered a place in accordance with a 'first come, first served' basis as per the waiting list.

4. 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.
5. Parents/guardians who are offered a place must complete and return our regular 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 the 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. Every effort must be made to ensure that transfer occurs at beginning of the school year, as to avoid transfer during term time.

Should there be multiple applications for transfer within a school year, selection criteria at (3) will apply.

### **Placement**

1. After placement in the class a relevant Individual Education Plan will be provided for the child. This plan will have an input from all parties involved with child's education. The learning targets within the IEP are typically updated termly, based on pupil's emerging needs and targets attained.
2. Each child in the class for Autism needs will be assigned to an age 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.
3. A review will take place at the end of the child's first year 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
- If in the event that a placement is inappropriate, the school will liaise with appropriate agencies in an effort to obtain a more suitable placement

### **Behaviour**

The school's code of behavior shall apply to pupils enrolled in the autism class, and parental/guardian acceptance of same is a condition of enrolment.

Sometimes children with special educational needs may display challenging or oppositional behaviours. All efforts will be made by the school to manage such behaviour using various strategies and through the implementation of the child's Individual Education Plan. Where a child's behaviour impacts in a way which is detrimental to education of 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**

It is school policy to facilitate the discharge of pupils from the classroom once they have reached the age of thirteen. It will be deemed compulsory that the year that the student turns 13 will be her/his last year. Pupils who reach the age of thirteen after September 30th in any year will be permitted to complete that academic year. This means a June discharge in the following year. Re transfer to secondary school: Scoil Fhionáin will facilitate all transfer of records/reports as well as assist with any information required with regards to the student and Scoil Fhionáin will be deemed to have authority to forward all relevant reports and assessments to the secondary school unless specifically instructed in writing not to do so.

Discharge may also be recommended after the first and/or any subsequent year if following psychological assessments and consultation with the parents/guardians, it is felt that the placement is no longer appropriate and serves the best interest of the child. 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.

Fr James Gillespie, Chairperson BOM 8/4/21 Date,

on behalf of the Board of Management of Scoil Fhionáin