

Admission Policy of ABACAS Special School

Treepark Road, Kilnamanagh, Dublin D24 A2XF

Roll number: 203780

School Patron: Autism Ireland

1. Introduction

This Admission Policy complies with the requirements of the Education Act 1998, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and the Equal Status Act 2000. In drafting this policy, the Board of Management of the school has consulted with school staff, the school patron and with parents/guardians of children attending the school.

The policy was approved by the school patron on 11th September 2020. It is published on the school's website (www.abacasspecialschool.ie) and will be made available in hardcopy, on request, to any person who requests it.

The relevant dates and timelines for ABACAS Special School's admission process are set out in the school's Annual Admission Notice, which is published annually on the school's website at least one week before the commencement of the admission process for the school year concerned.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the **Annual Admission Notice** for the school year concerned.

The **Application Form for Admission** is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy on request to any person who requests it.

2. Characteristic spirit and general objectives of the school

Our mission is to create opportunities through education, in an environment that is caring, supportive and joyful, improving the lives of children and young adults with autism and the lives of their families. Our ethos is based on the following principles:

- Child-centred
- Evidence-based intervention
- Individualised education
- Multi-denominational
- Co-educational
- Parental involvement
- Professional respect

ABACAS Special School Kilnamanagh caters for pupils aged 4 to 18 who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder and Complex Needs. Pupils are divided into five classes (each comprising six pupils) according to their age, skill strengths and developmental need.

Our school provides specialist curricula designed to meet the varied needs of each child and to facilitate the development of each child's unique potential. Our school strives to maximise the learning skills, communication skills, social skills, self-care skills, self-worth and independence of our pupils by drawing on a range of evidence-based, instructional principles and methodologies (Applied Behavioural Analysis, TEACCH, Picture Exchange Communication (PECS), Discrete Trial Training, etc.) in line with DES policies for children on the autism spectrum.

Students have access to a broad, balanced, relevant and developmental range of curricular experiences in appropriate curricular areas as set out in The Primary School Curriculum (1999). Our aim is to develop skills for success in the home, school and the wider community.

3. Admission Statement

ABACAS Special School will not discriminate in its admission of a student to the school on any of the following:

- (a) the gender ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (b) the civil status ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (c) the family status ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (d) the sexual orientation ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (e) the religion ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (f) the disability ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (g) the ground of race of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (h) the Traveller community ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned, or
- (i) the ground that the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned has special educational needs

As per section 61 (3) of the Education Act 1998, 'civil status ground', 'disability ground', 'discriminate', 'family status ground', 'gender ground', 'ground of race', 'religion ground', 'sexual orientation ground' and 'Traveller community ground' shall be construed in accordance with section 3 of the Equal Status Act 2000.

ABACAS Special School will cooperate with the National Council for Special Education in the performance by the Council of its functions under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 relating to the provision of education to children with special educational needs, including in particular by the provision and operation of a special class or classes when requested to do so by the Council.

ABACAS Special School will comply with any direction served on the patron or the board, as the case may be, under section 37A and any direction served on the board under section 67(4B) of the Education Act.

ABACAS is a school which, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students with a category of special educational needs specified by the Minister and does not discriminate in relation to the admission of a student who does not have the category of needs specified.

4. Categories of Special Educational Needs catered for in the school/special class

ABACAS Special School, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Complex Needs.

Definition of an ASD diagnosis: Assessment and classification of autism or autistic spectrum disorder by a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist using DSM-IV,V or ICD-10 and /or multidisciplinary assessment of same by a professional team (including a clinical psychologist/educational psychologist).

Definition of Complex Needs: Individuals with a primary diagnosis on the autism spectrum of Pervasive Developmental Delay/ Autism (Asperger, autism, PDD - NOS) with one or more associated difficulties in terms of: environmental/social disadvantage, cognitive or language impairment, emotional or behavioural problems.

Any child applying to the school must include the following documents (in hard copy) with their completed Application Form for Admission:

- a) a recent documented and confirmed diagnosis of ASD (photocopy will suffice).
- b) a written recommendation from a certified psychologist for an **ASD-specific education in a special school** (photocopy will suffice).
If the child is already attending a special school, a letter from the Principal of the child's school confirming that the child is a pupil at that school will suffice.
- c) in the case of past pupils of an ASD class in St. Kevin's Boys' National School, a written recommendation from a NEPS psychologist for an **ASD-specific education in a special school** (photocopy will suffice).

Any application form not accompanied by these documents will be returned to the applicant and will not be considered for admission unless the necessary documentation is submitted. If the school does not receive the necessary documentation by the closing date for applications, the application will be returned to the applicant with the advice to apply again the following year.

5. Admission of Students

This school shall admit each student seeking admission except where –

- a) the school is oversubscribed (please see [section 6](#) below for further details)
- b) a parent/guardian of a student, when required by the principal in accordance with section 23(4) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, fails to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour of the school is acceptable to him or her and that he or she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student
- c) the applicant does not have the specified category of special educational needs provided for by this school, i.e. Autism Spectrum Disorder and Complex Needs.

- d) the applicant has not provided a recent documented and confirmed diagnosis of ASD and either a written recommendation from a certified psychologist for an ASD-specific education in a special school or a letter from the Principal of the special school the child is currently attending confirming that the child is a pupil at that school.

NOTE: If you child is offered a place by the school, the SENO may request additional or more up-to-date documentation from parents/guardians before the child can be enrolled in the school.

NOTE: Applicants must be at least 4 years of age and not yet 18 years of age on 1st September of the year in which they are applying for admission.

6. Oversubscription

In the event that the school is oversubscribed, the school will, when deciding on applications for admission, apply the following selection criteria in the order listed below to those eligible applications that are received within the timeline for receipt of applications as set out in the school's Annual Admission Notice:

- a) The child is a sibling of a child currently enrolled in the school.
b) The child is a past pupil of an ASD class in St. Kevin's Boys' School Kilnamanagh

NOTE: Applicants who have not submitted the required documentation outlined in Section 4 to the school by the closing date for applications will not be considered.

All eligible applicants will be divided into three categories:

Category A: Applicants who meet selection criterion a)

Category B: Applicants who meet selection criterion b)

Category C: All remaining applicants.

If there are applicants who meet selection criterion a) and the number of places available is greater than or equal to the number of applicants in Category A, all applicants in Category A will be offered a place.

If the number of places available is less than the number of applicants in Category A, all applicants in Category A will be entered into a lottery. The outcome of this lottery will determine who is awarded the available place(s) and, in the case of unsuccessful Category A applicants, will determine their placement on the annual oversubscription list (see below for information on lottery procedure).

If there are applicants who meet selection criteria b) and the number of places available after applying selection criterion a) is greater than or equal to the number of applicants in Category B, all applicants in Category B will be offered a place.

If the number of available places remaining after applying selection criterion a) is less than the number of applicants in Category B, all applicants in Category B will be entered into a lottery. This lottery will also be performed in the event that there are no available places remaining after applying selection criterion a). The outcome of this lottery will determine who is awarded any remaining place(s) and, in the case of unsuccessful Category B

applicants, will determine their placement on the annual oversubscription list (see below for information on lottery procedure).

If the number of available places remaining after applying selection criteria a) and b) is less than the number of applicants in Category C, all applicants in Category C will be entered into a lottery. This lottery will also be performed in the event that there are no available places remaining after applying selection criteria a) and b). The outcome of this lottery will determine who is awarded any remaining place(s) and, in the case of unsuccessful Category C applicants, will determine their placement on the annual oversubscription list (see below for information on lottery procedure).

Lottery Procedure:

If required as per the above, all Category A applicants will be entered into a lottery, which will be performed by the Principal and witnessed by a representative of the Board of Management and an independent observer. The name of each Category A applicant will be placed in a drum. The Principal will draw names from the drum, one by one, until the drum is empty. The order in which the names are drawn from the drum will be recorded on a numbered list, referred to as **List A**.

Next, if required as per the above, all Category B applicants will be entered into a lottery, which will be performed by the Principal and witnessed by a representative of the Board of Management and an independent observer. The name of each Category B applicant will be placed in a drum. The Principal will draw names from the drum, one by one, until the drum is empty. The order in which the names are drawn from the drum will be recorded on a numbered list, referred to as **List B**.

Finally, all Category C applicants will be entered into a lottery, which will be performed by the Principal and witnessed by a representative of the Board of Management and an independent observer. The name of each Category C applicant will be placed in a drum. The Principal will draw names from the drum, one by one, until the drum is empty. The order in which the names are drawn from the drum will be recorded on a numbered list, referred to as **List C**.

These three lists (A, B and C) will together make up the annual oversubscription list. The place or places available will be offered to applicants in the order in which they appear on the oversubscription list, starting with the applicants on List A, followed by the applicants on List B and finally the applicants on List C. If an applicant refuses the offer of a place, the place will be offered to the next candidate on the oversubscription list, and so on until all places have been accepted.

NOTE: The oversubscription list applies only to applications for the school year in question. A new list will be drawn up each year. Unsuccessful applicants are therefore required to reapply with the required documentation the following year if they are to be considered for admission.

7. What will not be considered or taken into account

In accordance with section 62(7)(e) of the Education Act, the school will not consider or take into account any of the following in deciding on applications for admission or when placing a student on a waiting list for admission to the school:

- a) a student's prior attendance at a preschool or preschool service;
- b) the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;

- c) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude; other than insofar as it is necessary in order to ascertain whether or not the student has the category of special educational needs concerned;
- d) the occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a student's parents/guardians;
- e) a requirement that a student, or his or her parents/guardians, attend an interview, open day or other meeting as a condition of admission;
- f) a student's connection to the school by virtue of a member of his or her family attending or having previously attended the school, except where the student has a sibling currently enrolled in the school;
- g) the date and time on which an application for admission was received by the school.

This is subject to the application being received at any time during the period specified for receiving applications set out in the Annual Admission Notice of the school for the school year concerned.

8. Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to ABACAS Special School will be based on the following:

- Our school's Admission Policy
- Our school's Annual Admission Notice
- The information provided by the applicant in the school's Application Form for Admission and in the required documentation specified in Section 4, received during the period specified in our Annual Admission Notice for receiving applications

(Please see [section 14](#) below in relation to applications received outside of the admissions period and [section 15](#) below in relation to applications for places in years other than the intake group.)

Selection criteria that are not included in our school Admission Policy will not be used to make a decision on an application for a place in our school.

9. Notifying applicants of decisions

Applicants will be informed in writing as to the decision of the school, within the timeline outlined in the Annual Admission Notice.

If a student is not offered a place in our school, the reasons why they were not offered a place will be communicated in writing to the applicant, including, where applicable, details of the student's ranking against the selection criteria and details of the student's place on the oversubscription list for the school year concerned.

Applicants will be informed of the right to seek a review/right of appeal of the school's decision (see [section 18](#) below for further details).

10. Acceptance of an offer of a place by an applicant

In accepting an offer of admission from ABACAS Special School, you must indicate—

- (i) whether or not you have accepted an offer of admission for another school or schools. If you have accepted such an offer, you must also provide details of the offer or offers concerned and

- (ii) whether or not you have applied for and are awaiting confirmation of an offer of admission from another school or schools, and if so, you must provide details of the other school or schools concerned.

11. Circumstances in which offers may not be made or may be withdrawn

An offer of admission may not be made or may be withdrawn by ABACAS Special School where—

- (iii) it is established that information contained in the application is false or misleading.
- (iv) an applicant fails to confirm acceptance of an offer of admission on or before the date set out in the Annual Admission Notice of the school.
- (v) the parent/guardian of a student, when required by the principal in accordance with section 23(4) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, fails to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour of the school is acceptable to him or her and that he or she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student; or
- (vi) an applicant has failed to comply with the requirements of 'acceptance of an offer' as set out in [section 10](#) above.

12. Sharing of data with other schools

Applicants should be aware that section 66(6) of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 allows for the sharing of certain information between schools in order to facilitate the efficient admission of students.

13. Annual oversubscription list

In the event of there being more applications to the school year concerned than places available, a numbered oversubscription list of students whose applications for admission to ABACAS were unsuccessful due to the school being oversubscribed will be compiled in accordance with the procedures outlined in Section 6 and will remain valid for the school year in which admission is being sought.

Placement on the oversubscription list of ABACAS is in the order of priority assigned to the students' applications after the school has applied the selection criteria and lottery procedure in accordance with this admission policy (see Section 6).

Offers of any subsequent places that become available for and during the school year in relation to which admission is being sought will be made to those students on the annual oversubscription list, in accordance with the order of priority in relation to which the students have been placed on the list.

NOTE: The numbered oversubscription list applies only to applications for the school year in question. A new list will be drawn up each year. Unsuccessful applicants are therefore required to reapply with the required documentation the following year if they are to be considered for admission.

14. Late applications

All applications for admission received after the closing date as outlined in the Annual Admission Notice will be returned to the applicant with advice to apply the following year.

15. Procedures for admission of students to other years and during the school year

The procedures of the school in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the school to classes or years other than the school's intake group are as follows:

Due to the fact that ABACAS is a special school and does not have a regular yearly intake group as is the case in mainstream schools, the same procedures as outlined above apply to all admissions, regardless of the age of the child and the class they wish to be admitted to.

The procedures of the school in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the school, after the commencement of the school year in which admission is sought, are as follows:

In the event that a place becomes available in one of our classes during the school year, the place will be offered to the next applicant on the oversubscription list as defined in Section 13 above.

NOTE: The numbered oversubscription list applies only to applications for the school year in question. A new list will be drawn up each year. Unsuccessful applicants are therefore required to reapply with the required documentation the following year if they are to be considered for admission.

16. Declaration in relation to the non-charging of fees

This rule applies to all schools.

The board of ABACAS or any persons acting on its behalf will not charge fees for or seek payment or contributions (howsoever described) as a condition of-

- (a) an application for admission of a student to the school, or
- (b) the admission or continued enrolment of a student in the school.

17. Data protection

In accordance with our data protection policy, all application forms and supporting documentation will be retained for the duration of the school year (i.e. until the end of June in any given year), at which point they will be destroyed.

18. Reviews/appeals

Review of decisions by the board of Management

The parent/guardian of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may request the board to review a decision to refuse admission. Such requests must be made in accordance with Section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

The timeline within which such a review must be requested and the other requirements applicable to such reviews are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998 which are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

The board will conduct such reviews in accordance with the requirements of the procedures determined under Section 29B and with section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

Note: Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the Board of Management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **may request a review** of that decision by the Board of Management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Right of appeal

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, the parent/guardian of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may appeal a decision of this school to refuse admission.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(i) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due to the school being oversubscribed.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(ii) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due a reason other than the school being oversubscribed.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the Board of Management **prior to making an appeal** under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **may request a review** of that decision by the Board of Management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

Appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 will be considered and determined by an independent appeals committee appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills.

The timeline within which such an appeal must be made and the other requirements applicable to such appeals are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998 which are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

Signed: *Finola O'Rourke* (Chairperson)

Date: December 2022