POLICY FOR ENROLMENT
INTO
ASD CLASS FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM
AT

TARBERT COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Ratified by the Board of Management on: 9/2/21

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1. Introduction

The Board of Management of Tarbert Comprehensive School agreed with the Department of Education and Youth (DEY) and National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to provide a class for children with Autism (ASD). The class was established in 28/08/2020.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Tarbert Comprehensive School Admission Policy and Annual Admission Notice. Admission to the School, including admission to the ASD Class, is governed by the School's Admission Policy. This policy provides additional information regarding enrolment in the ASD Class and its operation and educational provision.

This enrolment policy is set out in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act (1998), the Epsen Act (2004) and the Schools Admission Policy. The Board of Management trusts that by providing this policy, parents will be assisted in relation to enrolment matters. The Principal or Deputy Principal will be happy to clarify any further matters arising from the policy.

The ASD class operates under the Rules for Post Primary Schools, The Education Act (1998). The Education Welfare Act (2000), enacted sections of The Education of Persons with Special Education Needs Act (2004), all relevant equality legislation and Department of Education and Youth (DEY) Circulars relevant to special education provision. In establishing the ASD class reference was also made to the NCSE (2016) advice on "*Guidelines for Setting Up and Organising Special Classes for Boards of Management and Principals of Primary and Post Primary Schools".*

This Policy also reflects Circular 0080/2024 and Circular 0039/2025, which set out new measures to support forward planning for special education provision and revised eligibility criteria for admission to special classes, together with Circulars 0053/2026 and 0063/2026 and associated Department and NCSE guidance.

The class depends on the grants and teacher resources provided by the Department of Education and Youth and it operates within the regulations laid down, by the Department. The ASD Class operates within the special-class provision sanctioned by the Department of Education and Youth and the NCSE and within the staffing, grants and other resources allocated for that provision.

This policy document was formulated through a process of collaboration with The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). It will be reviewed regularly.

SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

Autism/autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)

The ASD Class is intended for students with autism who meet the current eligibility requirements for placement in an autism special class, in accordance with the School's Admission Policy and relevant Department of Education and Youth and NCSE requirements.

What is an ASD Class?

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. Students enrolled in special classes should be included in mainstream classes to the greatest extent possible, in line with their abilities. In addition, there will be opportunities for reverse inclusion, whereby mainstream students participate in the ASD class also.

What Happens in ASD Class?

- Students learn different skills individually and in small groups in the ASD class and they practise the skills in their mainstream respective classrooms.

- Students from mainstream classes work with the students from the ASD class, through students in the ASD class integrating into mainstream and through reverse inclusion.
- There is regular communication between the mainstream class and the ASD class teachers/SNAs.
- In line with the Continuum of Support, there will be Individual Educational Planning for the student with the school and parents. Each student will have a Student Support File.
- Students in the ASD class follow the Post Primary school curriculum, differentiated, as appropriate, to their individual needs.
- Students are enabled to become independent learners and be able to ask for help when they need it.
- Students' self-confidence and self-esteem is developed.
- Students' emotional and behavioural self-regulation is nurtured.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced.
- Students' social skills especially interacting and communication with their peers is targeted.
- Listening skills and following instructions are enhanced.
- Students' awareness of their strengths and needs is promoted.
- Students' organisational and motor skills are developed.
- Students are taught coping skills for various situations in everyday life.

SECTION 2: ENROLMENT

Criteria for enrolment

1. The class is intended for pupils who have a diagnosis of ASD and who meet the current eligibility requirements for placement in an autism special class.

2. In line with Circular 0039/2025 and 0063/2026, all applications for admission to the ASD Class must include a letter from the NCSE confirming that the child meets the eligibility requirements for placement in an autism special class for the school year for which admission is sought.

3. Relevant Professional Reports may be requested by the School following confirmation of eligibility to assist with planning and supporting the student's transition into the ASD class, differentiation of teaching and learning and the provision of appropriate educational supports. Such reports do not form an additional criterion for admission.

Application Process

1. The registration process begins with a telephone call or visit from the Parents/Guardians.

2. Parents/Guardians seeking to enrol their child in the ASD class in Tarbert Comprehensive School are requested to complete an enrolment application form available from the School. This includes:

- the 'Application to Enrol Form' and,
- Application to Enrol in ASD Class of Tarbert Comprehensive School

3. Applications are not complete until the NCSE eligibility letter confirming that the child meets the eligibility requirements for placement in an autism special class for the school year for which admission is sought is provided. The School may verify this information with the NCSE as required and will process data in line with the School's Data Protection Policy.

4. The fully completed forms are returned to the School. Professional reports may be requested separately to assist the School in planning for the student's transition, differentiation of teaching and learning and the provision of appropriate educational supports. Such reports do not form part of the criteria for admission.

Advisory Board (AB)

All potential applicants may be visited by a member of the ASD team to observe the student in their existing placement, with the consent of the Parents/Guardians, for the purposes of transition and educational planning. Such a visit does not form part of the criteria for admission.

Following confirmation of eligibility, the Advisory Board (AB) may review relevant information provided in relation to a student for the purposes of transition, educational planning and supporting the student's needs. Admission decisions are made in accordance with the School's Admission Policy and Annual Admission Notice.

The AB comprises of:

- The School Principal;
- The School Deputy Principal
- The Special Class Teacher
- The Special Education Needs Coordinator (as required)

At the request of the Principal, the AB meet as needed.

Offers of Places

Where a student is a current student of Tarbert Comprehensive School, attending a mainstream class in the School at the time an application for admission to the ASD Class is made, and has been confirmed by the NCSE as meeting the eligibility requirements for placement in an autism special class, that student will be given priority for an available place in the ASD Class over applicants who are not current students of Tarbert Comprehensive School.

Offers of places are contingent on receipt of the NCSE eligibility letter by the deadline set out in the Annual Admissions Notice confirming eligibility for placement in an autism special class for the school year for which admission is sought. Where the letter is not provided by that deadline the application may be treated as incomplete in accordance with the School's Admission Policy and Annual Admission Notice**.**

Where an applicant has engaged with the NCSE Parents Notify process but the NCSE Letter of Eligibility has not issued by the deadline set out in the Annual Admission Notice, the School may contact the NCSE, where appropriate, to establish the status of the eligibility process. The application will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Admission Policy, Annual Admission Notice and applicable Department and NCSE requirements.

Where the NCSE Letter of Eligibility is subsequently received, the application will be processed in accordance with the School's Admission Policy. Where a place remains available, an offer may be made. Where the ASD Class is oversubscribed, the application will be dealt with in accordance with the applicable oversubscription and waiting-list provisions of the School's Admission Policy and Annual Admission Notice.

Parents/Guardians are notified in writing as to the decision of the School, within the timeline outlined in the Annual Admissions Notice. Parents must respond within the timeframe specified by the Principal and in accordance with the Annual Admission Notice**.**

Where an offer of a specialist placement is accepted, the School will notify the NCSE within 10 days, in accordance with Circular 0063/2026 and the applicable NCSE notification process.

Concessionary Places

In instances where there is spare capacity in an ASD Class because of insufficient eligible children, the Board of Management may offer a place to a maximum of two pupils who do not meet the eligibility criteria but who could benefit from enrolment in the class for one year on a concessionary basis. Such placements must be supported by the SENO.

The question of the continued enrolment of these pupils can only be considered once all eligible pupils have been accommodated.

Late Applications
All applications for admission received after the closing date as outlined in the Annual Admissions Notice will be considered and decided upon in accordance with our School's Admission Policy, the Education Admissions to School Act 2018 and any regulations made under the Act.

Late applicants will be considered if places are still available; otherwise, they will be dealt with in accordance with the waiting-list and oversubscription provisions set out in the School's Admission Policy and Annual Admission Notice.

Waiting List
Where the ASD Class is oversubscribed, a waiting list will be established and maintained in accordance with the School's Admission Policy and Annual Admission Notice. The waiting list will remain valid for the school year for which admission is sought.

Should your child or young person be placed on a waiting list for a place, their personal data may be shared with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) for the purposes of planning for the provision of special education placements.

SECTION 3: REVIEWS/APPEALS

Review
The review and appeal procedures set out in the School's Admission Policy apply equally to applications for admission to the ASD Class.

The Board of Management of Tarbert Comprehensive School in compliance with Section 19(3) of the Educational Welfare Act 2000 will make a decision in writing in respect of an application for enrolment in line with the Annual Admissions Notice.

The parent 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 Youth.

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 application is refused, parents/guardians may request a review by the Board in accordance with Section 29C of the Education Act 1998 before pursuing a formal appeal under Section 29.

Right of Appeal
Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, the parent 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 to 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.

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 a

SECTION 4: EXCEPTIONAL CASES & OVERSUBSCRIPTION

In line with Department of Education guidance, no soft barriers will be applied to prevent the enrolment of a child who meets the eligibility criteria for the ASD Class. Where a child meets these criteria and places are available, the School will admit the child.

Where applications exceed available places, the selection criteria set out in the School's Admission Policy and Annual Admission Notice will apply. A waiting list will be maintained in line with the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018. Priority will be given to applicants' resident within the School's catchment area.

In addition, the Board of Management may:

1. Apply the priority set out in the School's Admission Policy to ensure that catchment applicants are not displaced by applicants from outside catchment, particularly where the applicant from outside catchment has been offered or could reasonably access, a place in an ASD Class in another post-primary school closer to their home, following consultation with the NCSE.

2. Determine, in exceptional circumstances, that the educational needs of an eligible applicant cannot be appropriately met within the School's existing special-class provision and, in such circumstances, formally refer the matter to the NCSE and/or Department of Education and Youth for consideration of the additional provision, resources or supports required to facilitate the student's placement. Any such determination shall not, of itself, constitute a ground for refusal of admission.

3. Determine, in exceptional circumstances, that serious concerns regarding the appropriateness or safety of a proposed placement require further consideration, in consultation with the NCSE and other relevant professionals.

Any such decision will be clearly recorded, evidence-based and subject to the review and appeal procedures set out in Section 3 of this policy and under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

SECTION 5: PROGRESS REVIEW

Annual Review

An annual review meeting is held by the AB in the second term with respect to each student in the ASD class. This timing is to facilitate potential NCSE deadlines. The purpose of the meeting is to review progress and to establish if the ASD class remains the best placement for the student. Each student is discussed individually. The most up to date reports/information available on the student are presented to the AB. The student's

current presentation and needs are then discussed by the team. The School will notify the NCSE of any change in placement arising from the annual review where required, in line with NCSE processes and timelines.

The AB is cognisant of the parents' views at all times. Prior to the annual review meeting of the AB, a formal meeting between each student's parents and ASD class staff take place. The parents can then articulate their views on their child's progress and preference for their child's placement. Where possible, the voice of the child will also be included in this review.

Arising from the discussion a decision is reached as to whether or not the ASD class remains the optimum placement for each child and is in the child's best interest.

Where, arising from the annual review, it is considered that the ASD Class may no longer be the most appropriate placement for the student, the AB will make a recommendation to the Board of Management. In considering such a recommendation, the following may be taken into account:

1. The AB in consultation with the ASD class staff considers the student able to return to fulltime mainstream education.
2. The AB no longer considers the ASD Class as the most suitable placement for the child's educational development.
3. The child's parents/guardians request transfer from the ASD Class.
4. The AB considers that the student's educational needs may be more appropriately met in an alternative educational placement.

The AB advises the Board of Management of the school on its recommendations following the review meeting.

ASD Class Transition

As part of the transition from the ASD class, the AB will also make recommendations on each child's on-going unique educational needs and ASD needs. The AB will finalise an "*ASD Class Report*" which includes the above recommendations. This report is furnished to the new school of each child leaving the ASD Class. The ASD class staff will liaise with the new school/class for each child leaving the ASD Class. Advice on school transition will be guided by the NCSE (2016) guidelines for schools on "*Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs to make Successful Transitions".*

APPENDIX 1: NCSE ELIGIBILITY AND PROFESSIONAL REPORTS

- An NCSE Letter of Eligibility confirming that the student meets the eligibility requirements for placement in an autism special class for the school year for which admission is sought.

- In the interest of the student and in order that their individual educational needs can be understood and adequately addressed, parents/guardians are encouraged to provide the School with relevant professional reports and assessments following confirmation of eligibility. Where available, detailed multidisciplinary assessment and recommendations can assist the School in planning for the student's transition, differentiating teaching and learning, and putting appropriate educational supports in place. Such reports do not form an additional criterion for admission.

APPENDIX 2: ASD CLASS ENROLMENT FORMS

APPLICATION FORM FOR ENROLMENT (ASD Class)

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Name: _____ _____

Address: _____

_____

Email: _____

Tel.: No.: _____ PPSN: _____

Student's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Present School: _____

Class: _____

I wish to have the above-named child considered for enrolment at Tarbert Comprehensive School for the year _____ and give permission for Tarbert Comprehensive School to contact my child's school to arrange a visit of which I will be notified in advance. I also give permission for members of Tarbert Comprehensive ASD Class to have access to all materials forwarded to the School as part of the application process.

☐ NCSE Letter of Eligibility attached, confirming eligibility for placement in an autism special class for the school year for which admission is sought.

☐ I consent to Tarbert Comprehensive School verifying my child's NCSE status for the purposes of enrolment processing and NCSE planning requirements

Signed (Parent/Guardian): _____

Date: _____