



Admission Policy for Autism Class 2024/2025

Note: This policy must be considered in the context of the Admission Policy.

1. Introduction

Ballybay Central National School is a mainstream co-educational primary school in Athlone with an enrolment of approximately 220 pupils. With a growing awareness of the increasing need for provision for pupils with Autism in our local area and with a strong desire to support our community, the decision to provide a special class for children with a diagnosis of Autism was taken by the Board of Management of the school in conjunction with the principal and staff in May 2024.

2. Aim

Ballybay Central National School strives to offer a positive meaningful educational experience, which allows the child to develop to their full learning potential in an environment that offers clarity, predictability and calm.

3. Outline

The Autism Class at Ballybay Central National School is a class for children with Autism who have been recommended for placement in an Autism class in a mainstream primary school and who have the potential to integrate into a mainstream, age appropriate class.

This setting facilitates optimum inclusion as part of the school community with access to mainstream activities as appropriate.

The maximum class size is 6 pupils. Access to speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy etc. will be dependent on local Health Service Executive services.

All placements will be reviewed annually in order to ensure that the placement continues to be appropriate for each child.

4. Criteria for enrolment

A child will only be deemed eligible for an offer of placement when all the following criteria have been met:

- a. Assessment and classification of autism or ASD by a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist using DSM-IV/V or ICD-10 criteria OR multi-disciplinary assessment of same by a professional team, including a clinical psychologist.

- b. An explicit recommendation of placement in a Special Class for children with Autism must be provided by a recognised professional (as stated in point 1), with the recommendation not older than two years.
- c. A fully completed application form for enrolment has been submitted by the parents/guardians to the school.
- d. The school must have, together with the appropriate clinical services, the correct and necessary resources in place to attend to the specific needs of the particular child.
- e. The educational provision being provided to the children attending the Autism class in Ballybay Central National School will not be detrimentally affected by the level of special intervention required for the new child.
- f. The Health and Safety of the staff and children of Ballybay Central National School will not be put at risk by the presence and behaviour of a child attending Autism class in Ballybay Central National School.
- g. The pupils attending an Autism class, as with all pupils in the school, are subject to the provisions of the Code of Behaviour and parents of prospective pupils must accept and agree to the school's Code of Behaviour and the terms of the policy.
- h. The parents of the child must accept and agree to the school's Code of Behaviour and the terms of this policy.

5. Application Process

- a. Enrolment application forms for the Autism class will be accepted during the submission dates set out in our Annual Admissions Notice on our school website.

While the enrolment application form is available to download on our school website at www.ballybaycns.ie, requests for a paper version of the form as well as queries regarding supporting documentation should be made to office@ballybaycns.ie

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 admission policy.

- b. The enrolment application must be accompanied by all of the following supporting documentation supplied by parents/guardians:
 - An original Birth Certificate
 - Two original documents, as proof of address: Utility bill, Bank statement, Insurance policy, Social insurance document or a Document issued by a government department showing your address. These must be dated within three months of application.

- A written assessment and classification of autism or ASD by a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist using DSM-IV/V or ICD-10 criteria OR multi-disciplinary assessment of same by a professional team, including a clinical psychologist.
 - A written recommendation by the relevant professionals that a special class placement in a mainstream school is both necessary and suitable for the child. This recommendation should be no older than two years.
 - All other relevant reports – speech & language therapy/ occupational therapy and psychological reports.
- c. Where there are spaces available in the class for applicants, all applications received by the closing date will be considered. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.
- d. The Board of Management is responsible for admissions and must respect the rights of the existing school community and in particular the children already enrolled. In particular, the Board of Management reserves the right to refuse enrolment if it believes the school cannot meet the needs of a particular child.

6. Offer of a Place

If offered a place, an Acceptance Form will be issued to parents/guardians and must be returned to the school within fourteen days of issue to accept the place being offered. If this confirmation is not received within this timeframe, the school will take it that the place is not being accepted and the place will be reallocated.

The parents/guardians of a child who have been offered a place in the class will be invited to visit the school to meet with the Autism class teacher and the Principal of the school. Any information requested by the parents will be provided at this meeting. The parents/guardians will be invited on another occasion to come with their child to the class to meet with staff in the special class and see the classroom.

7. Oversubscription

In the event that the Autism class is oversubscribed, the school will, when deciding on applications for admission, apply the following selection criteria, in the order listed below. Only applications that fulfil the criteria as outlined in Section 4, and are received within the timeline for receipt of applications as set out in the school's annual admission notice will be considered.

A	Internal school transfer-children with an Autism/ASD diagnosis currently enrolled in the school for whom placement in a special class has been recommended by a professional.
B	Children living in the school catchment area: The Bogginfinn Roundabout to and including Carrowderry townland and St Patrick's River Well (Bridge after Kiltoom level crossing) and outlying areas in between.
C	Siblings and stepsiblings of children already enrolled in the school.

D	Children of permanent school staff members.
E	Children who were previously enrolled in Ballybay Central National School.
F	Other children from outside the school's catchment area. Where the child's home is outside the school's catchment area, children whose home address is closest to the school will be given priority.

8. Review/Appeals

The parents/guardians of the student may request the Board of Management 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.

The Board of Management 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.

9. Placement

Once the child has started in Ballybay Central National School's Autism class and after a period of time observing, assessing and interacting with the child, an Individual Education Plan will be developed in consultation with parents and relevant professionals. This will be reviewed on an on-going basis and will highlight priority-learning needs. These needs will be targeted through the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum. A placement review will take place at the end of each year to assess whether the child's placement is appropriate.

- The review will be carried out by school staff in consultation with parents.
- The outcome of the review will be examined by the Board of Management
- In the event that a placement is inappropriate, the school will liaise with appropriate agencies in an effort to obtain a more suitable placement

10. Integration

Integration with typically developing peers in inclusive mainstream classroom environments, in so far as possible, is the Board's aim. The nature of all integration shall be determined by reviews at appropriate intervals.

- The review will be carried out by school staff in consultation with parents.
- In the event that integration is appropriate, the staff will proceed with it.

11. Behaviour

In the event of a child with special educational needs displaying defiant 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 negative way on the other children in the class, teachers or SNAs to the extent that their constitutional rights are 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.

12. Discharge Policy

It is school policy to facilitate the discharge of pupils from the Autism class once they have completed 6th class or have reached the age of thirteen. It will be deemed compulsory that the year that the student turns 13 will be their 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.

The onus will be on the parents to negotiate the placement with a suitable secondary school. Ballybay Central National School will facilitate all transfer of records/reports and assist with any information required with regards to the student and Ballybay Central National School will be deemed to have authority to forward all relevant reports and assessments to the secondary school.

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. Discharge from the special classes may also happen if a pupil is fully integrated into the mainstream school. The Board of Management has the right to overrule any decision made in this regard.

13. Conclusion

Taking all of the above into account, the Board of Management reserves the right of admission.

Fulfilling the enrolment criteria does not necessarily ensure enrolment if:

- Necessary resources pertaining to the enrolment are not available
- Sufficient classroom space is not available
- The Board of Management decide that the school is unable to adequately meet the needs of the child

14. Ratification and Review

This Admission Policy will be reviewed annually. The Board of Management reserves the right to alter this policy, subject to its statutory obligations.