**ASD Class Policy**

The ASD classes are located in St. Peter and Paul’s National School, Drumconrath, Co. Meath.

There are a maximum of six children in each class with a teacher and two S.N.A.s. All students have a diagnosis of ASD. The school and the ASD classes work closely together with an emphasis on integration where appropriate. Opportunities for integration include shared curricular activities in and out of the classroom, when applicable shared play and social activities. We also share our sensory room with junior classes. The ASD classes works closely with the H.S.E. Multidisciplinary Autism Team – Speech and Language therapists, O.T.s and Social Workers visit the class on a regular basis.

Staffing rotation will be kept to a minimum to ensure continuity for pupils.

**Mission Statement**

The overall objective of the ASD Classes is to provide the highest quality education, which addresses the specific needs of pupils with ASD taking account of their individual learning styles. The ASD classes will:

* Provide education for each student in a safe, caring and stimulating environment.
* Value each student as an individual and treat him/her with dignity and respect.
* Acknowledge the students entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum, which is differentiated to take account of individual needs.
* Work in partnership with parents and other professionals in meeting the needs of the student.
* Develop social and life skills that will enable each student to achieve more in the future.
* Build on each student’s strengths and celebrate their achievements.
* Promote the understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder amongst the wider school community
* The class timetable is displayed in the classroom

**Curriculum**

The ASD Classes provide a balanced and wide ranging curriculum based on National guidelines. The core areas are Language and Communication, Mathematics, Personal and Social Development. Due to the pervasive nature of the Communication Disorder, particular emphasis is placed on social awareness, social interaction and life skills. Personal and social development permeates all areas of the curriculum.

Each student has their Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.) which address the area of the triad of impairment and objectives that should be worked at. The ASD classes are a highly structured place which offer security and predictability and enables more independence. Teaching is carried out in

individual teaching sessions, small groups and some whole class time. Children have their own individual schedules renewed on a weekly basis following IEP goals. The student’s main IEP goals are set around social and life skills. These skills will enable children to be independent. Break times are structured in such a way to facilitate the learning of life and social skills and the constant reinforcement of same.

Therefore;

* setting the table,
* asking for food (developed from using signs, to words, to full sentences)
* tidying away, doing dishes and other chores are all crucial skills to be taught , learned and practiced.

**Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

In our ASD class we aim to;

* Listen to what parents have to contribute in relation to a child’s likes/dislikes and things their child might find frustrating or stressful.
* Aim to minimize stress for each pupil.
* Ensure the pupil understands the routines of the setting, supported by a visual timetable if necessary.
* Make sure the rules are clear.
* Value any special interest a child may have and build their learning around these.
* Encourage friendship among peers by modelling appropriate interactions and teaching the rules of fair play.
* Explicitly teach social interaction and social play skills
* Encourage adult support to encourage child’s independence.
* Match our daily practice to the needs of the child.

**Communication, Language and Development**

* Respond to and praise all efforts at communication.
* Say child’s name before speaking to them to gain their attention.
* Give instructions one at a time.
* Break down longer instructions into small steps.
* Set up situations that will encourage each child to communicate to the best of their ability i.e. offering a choice of two objects.
* PECS – use Picture Exchange Communication System where and when appropriate.
* Teach children the rules of communication – turn taking etc.
* Seek and utilize the advice and recommendations of Speech and Language Therapists. Seek advice from S.L.T on appropriate strategies to use with the child.

**Physical Development**

* Help children develop their body awareness and where their bodies are in space.
* Seek and utilize advice and recommendations of other professionals (i.e. O.T.) with regard to all of the above.
* Seek and utilize advice from other professionals on appropriate strategies to use with the children in formulating their I.E.P.s and share them with other caregivers if necessary.

**Creative Development**

* Encourage children to experience different materials and textures through art and craft activities.
* Celebrate festivals, special occasions with other school pupils.
* Model imaginative role play and link this to child’s interest.
* Show the child that objects can represent other things.
* Enable pupils to participate in music lessons and explore elements of music as appropriate.
* Encourage learning through play.

***Play***

* *Help children develop through play, indentify areas of interest to the child and use this as a way of engaging with them,*
* *Take the child’s interest as a starting point for planning activities that will interest them,*
* *Develop activity-based learning,*
* *Encourage active learning through play at every opportunity,*
* *Enable pupils to learn life skills through play and place a major emphasis on creating learning experiences based on real life objects to develop pupils’ life skills (set table at lunch times, lay out cutlery,place-mats, etc.)*
* *Through play children explore and develop learning experiences which helps them make sense of the world. It also helps them understand the need for rules and find new ways of doing things.*

***Linkage and integration***

*The ASD Classes are an integral part of Drumconrath National School, which enables the additional support needs of each pupil to be met through a continuum of integrated experiences. Every opportunity is taken to encourage the integration of ASD pupils with all other children in our school.*

* *ASD pupils may attend school gatherings and celebrations (assemblies, award ceremonies, Christmas plays, sports days, etc.), when appropriate.*
* *ASD. pupils are integrated at lunch time when the situation is suitable. Teachers may decide to operate a “buddy” system whereby suitable pupils would be paired together for social and personal development.*

***I.T.***

*Pupils are exposed to I.T. throughout their learning experiences in ASD Classes. Educational software, DVDs or websites are used to enhance teaching and learning and promote Social Skills- good waiting, taking turns, making choices, sitting for required periods of time etc.I-Pads are used for individual work with pupils*

***Sensory Room;***

*We have access to our Sensory Room which may be used by ASD pupils at appropriate times. Children can experience and explore equipment there*

***Health and safety***

*Medical hygiene*

*Refer to Health & Safety statement.*

*The care needs of the child are looked after by our S.N.As.*

*It is expected that a pupil will not come to school if they have an illness. If a teacher/principal feels a pupil is unfit for school s/he may phone parent/guardian to inform them of this.*

***Individual teachers’ planning and reporting***

*The teacher is required and needs to plan work for all children in his/her care. The teacher will be central to drawing up IEPs with the help of other professionals which will lie at the heart of the long term plans. The teacher will also draw up individual or group schedules on a weekly or daily basis which will form his/her short term planning.*

***Parental involvement***

*Liaison book/Seesaw/Class Dojo*

*Links between the ASD Class teachers and home are vital to ensure a consolidated approach.*

* *The Liaison Book/Seesaw/Class Dojo serves as a first line of communication between home and school. It should be completed daily to enable the exchange vital information regarding each pupil between home and school. The Liaison book will be retained by the teacher at end of school year and kept on file at school.*
* *Parent-teacher Meetings are held at least once per school year. This may vary according to individual pupil’s needs.*

***Assessment and record keeping***

*In our ASD Classes we observe and assess children regularly as part of our day-to-day practice. Assessment may be of a formal or informal nature, depending on its function. We use our observations and assessments to identify children’s interests, identify next steps in learning, and plan motivating experiences for each child. This process involves systematic observation and assessment of all areas of the child’s development and planning to meet their individual needs with regards to each pupil;*

* *Personal, social and emotional development,*
* *Communication and language,*
* *Problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy,*
* *Knowledge and understanding of the child,*
* *Physical development,*
* *Creative development.*

*Each pupil’s progress is generally assessed by:*

* *Observation (of pupil by teacher and other professionals in classroom, playground or other setting).*
* *Teacher designed tasks,*
* *Specific Checklists from SESS (recording pupils rate of success on various tasks)*
* *Daily schedules (each daily schedule outlines the tasks- step by step and pupils response),*
* *Formal testing (ie. PEP 3).*

*In our ASD Classes we keep detailed records of each pupil’s progress in the form of:*

* *Daily Schedule; (clearly defined tasks outlined in short, simple steps, the objective for that task and pupil’s response)*
* *Behaviour Records; A daily behaviour record sheet is completed by the pupils instructor for that day if we feel the child’s behaviour warrants it. If a pupil exhibits a recurring, problematic behaviour, a Behaviour Analysis process may be drawn up. The problematic behaviour is then tracked and recorded and intervention may begin. Social Stories are often used to manage negative behaviour patterns. Positive behaviour is rewarded instantaneously and appropriately.*
* *Liaison Book/Seesaw/Class Dojo are essential means of communication, whereby parents and teacher exchange vital information on a daily basis. It is a diary system which operates between home and school in which the class teacher will relay information regarding the child’s day.*

***Equality of participation and access***

We follow an individualized programme for all children therefore access and equality lies at the base of what we do and try to achieve in our ASD Classes

***Timetable& School Day***

*A detailed timetable of daily activities is displayed clearly in our ASD Classes. Many children with Autism are visual learners. We aim to use a visual timetable to help each child understand the passing of time and the concept of past and future. Each activity should be represented pictorially and represented on this visual timetable for each pupil. Objects of reference may also be used if necessary.*

*Children in our ASD classes will be on a shorter day for the first two years that they are with us and they will go on to a full day at 1st class level for their remaining 6 years in the school.*

***Resources***

*The use of concrete materials and educational recourses form a large part of our teaching techniques by using a wide range of resources; including:*

* *Teacher designed tasks and resources,*
* *Educational games/ toys, matching, sorting games,*
* *Jigsaws,*
* *Sorting*
* *Bean bags*
* *Lego*
* *Trampoline*
* *Building blocks*
* *Imaginative toys: cars, animals, zoo, sea creatures,*
* *Puppets, cuddly toys*
* *Bubbles*
* *Playdough,*
* *Water and Sand*
* *Musical instruments*
* *Paints, Art and Craft materials,*
* *P.E. Equipment (balls, ropes, bats, bean bags etc.)*
* *Bicycles*
* *Scooter*
* *Resources as recommended by other professionals- therapy etc.*

**IEP**

We complete an IEP for each pupil in our ASD Classes during the first term of the school year. We review it before end of term 2. Each pupil’s IEP is drawn up based on information and recommendations from teachers, principal, parents, other agencies and professionals (i.e. psychologists, Speech and Language therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, NEPS psychologist), as appropriate. To ensure a consistent approach to the child’s development, it is our aim to hold a planning meeting regarding each pupil’s IEP which may include parents and/or other professionals involved with the child, as required.

Each IEP should provide appropriate learning experiences that the child is able to engage with, which builds upon each child’s current level of development and address each pupil’s particular area of need.

The IEP will indicate targets and objectives, to be aimed for and a review date to facilitate evaluation of the IEP.

**Transitioning**

As professionals we may feel that a child in our ASD class might transition to Mainstream. If this is the case discussions are held with NEPS, SENO, HSE and Parents with a view to putting a transition programme in place.

**Models of Intervention:** An eclectic approach is used incorporating a range of elements which may include.

* TEACCH will be introduced to the pupil as an integral part of the programme. Visual timetables would be used within the pupil’s schedule
* PECS may be used as part of a pupil’s communication system
* ABA may be a component of the individual programme offered
* Access to Speech and Language Therapy is provided by the HSE and is subject to their own budget constraints.
* Access to Occupational Therapy is provided by the HSE and is subject to their budget constraints.
* Access to a Sensory Room is used as a reward and /or to reduce the pupil’s level of stimulation
* Access is provided to a wide range of multi-sensory experiences.

**Transport**: The S.E.N.O. determines which children are entitled to transport. Arrangements are then put in place by Bus Eireann to facilitate this.

Parents need to ensure that their child is ready to be collected by the escort in good time.

Parents must bring their child to the taxi/bus in the morning and collect from the taxi/bus after school. This is very important as escorts cannot leave other children in the taxi/bus unattended.

**Absence Procedure**

* Parents should phone the school directly, school number 041 6854178
* Inform the escort by text prior to the pickup time of your child’s inability to attend school
* Do not relay the absenteeism through the escort.
* When a child returns to school after an absence a note should be written explaining the reason for the absence.

**Playground Supervision**

* There is an enclosed playground where the children are supervised at all times and encouraged to interact socially. Some pupils may be encouraged to go to the main yard and socialize with the support of an adult.(SNA)
* A teacher is present at break times in each playground and all SNAs are also on duty.

**Medical Issues**

* Parents are requested to inform school should their child have a medical condition.
* If a child becomes ill at school or has an accident, parents will be informed as soon as possible. They will be asked to collect their child. In the event of an accident or serious illness parents will be notified and if necessary staff will accompany the child to hospital where they will meet parents.

**Transfer from Primary Autism class To Secondary:** Pupils from the ASD classes will normally be transferred between the ages of 12 and 13.

We would like that a transitional programme would be in place to assist smooth transition but this is dependent on the 2nd level school

**Review**

This policy is reviewed by the Board of Management every two years or sooner if required.