



St. Augustine's College
Admission Policy for Autism Unit

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Rationale

This policy is set out in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004 and the Equal Status Act 2000.

This policy must be read in conjunction with and is part of the overall Student Admissions Policy for St. Augustine's College.

The Autism Unit is funded and resourced by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The Board of Management of the school has the responsibility for the ongoing management of the Autism Unit, having regard to the funding, resources, services and space available.

The aim of St. Augustine's College is to offer a positive meaningful educational experience to the student that allows her/him to develop to their full learning potential, in an environment that offers clarity, predictability and calm. After a period of time observing, assessing and inter-acting with the student, an Individual Education Plan will be developed following consultation with Parents/Guardians and with other relevant professional staff (e.g. NEPS Psychologist, Teacher(s) of Special Educational Needs, Occupational Therapist, School Principal/Deputy Principal, etc.) as deemed appropriate.

The aim of the Autism Unit is to offer a specific learning environment with a mainstream post-primary school. This setting facilitates optimum inclusion as part of the school community with access to mainstream educational activities that are available and that are deemed appropriate to the ongoing education of the student.

External Support Services

Essential services are provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE). These services include Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy or Physiotherapy. The Board of Management at St. Augustine's College has no function in accessing these services, but merely acts as a relevant conduit for their provision, where available and possible.

Furthermore, St. Augustine's College cannot guarantee any additional service or support that may be available to the student through the offices of the HSE. St. Augustine's College does

not have the resources to follow up on these services and it is a matter for the Parents/Guardians alone to ensure that all such possible support services are being accessed and availed of.

Important note regarding St Augustine's College Autism Unit.

A parent / guardian who wish to apply for a place for an incoming First Year student in the Autism Unit must note that an offer of a place in St Augustine's College is not an offer of a place in the Autism Unit.

St. Augustine's College Special Class will cater for students who are classified on the Autism spectrum. Entry is limited to students who are currently enrolled from 2nd to 6th year in the school along with the first years enrolled for September 2022-2023.

To be considered for a place in the Autism Unit, the parent / guardian must apply in writing directly to; The Principal, St Augustine's College.

This is to be done on or before **November 12th** of the year preceding the year for which the application is made, (i.e. typically when the student in question is in 6th Class Primary School).

For the school year 2022-2023 this deadline is **November 12th** .This application is made independently but in addition to the application made for a St Augustine's College place by this parent / guardian.

If a student meets the criteria for enrolment in the Autism Unit, this information will be communicated in a timely way to the parent / guardian. However, a formal offer of a place in an Autism Unit is made only if the student is subsequently offered a place in First Year. If a student does not receive an offer then no offer of a place in the unit can be made.

Acceptance of a place in First Year does not mean that a place in the Unit is secured. If the student does not satisfy the criteria for enrolment in the Unit, this will be communicated in a timely way. In such cases, the parent / guardian may wish to seek enrolment in a suitable placement elsewhere.

St Augustine’s College will operate one Special Class for the school year 2022-2023. It should be noted that the Autism Unit will be in temporary accommodation while awaiting a permanent structure.

Application and Decision Dates for admission to access of the Special Class for 2022-23

1.	The school will commence accepting applications for admission to the Special Class on	Monday 18th October
2.	The school shall cease accepting applications for admission to the Special Class on	Friday 12th November before 1.10pm
3.	Applicants will be notified of the decision on their application for admission to the Special Class by	Friday January 21st 2022
4.	Applicants must confirm acceptance of an offer of admission in the Special Class by	February 1st 2022

Enrolment Policy, St Augustine’s College

For the Special Class

Mission Statement

St Augustine’s College is a Voluntary, Catholic Secondary School under the trusteeship of the Augustinian School Trust. Our school dedicates itself to educational excellence taking into account the uniqueness and complexity of each individual. We strive to create an atmosphere where students are happy and thrive in an environment with the Augustinian ethos of Unitas, Veritas, Caritas (Unity, Truth and Love).

**“Our mission is to provide a complete education based on Augustinian principles of
Unity, Truth and Love.”**

Rationale

The Department of Education and Skills recognises the challenges posed by students diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. For the school year 2022-2023, St Augustine’s College will have one Special Support Class to cater for those students who are on the Autistic Spectrum and who can participate with support in a mainstream school.

For the purpose of clarity, the term Special Class will be used in this document. The Special Class will have the capacity to cater for a maximum of six students who:

- Are secondary aged students (as per Department of Education and Science Guidelines) and have completed primary school education or equivalent.

- Have a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (DSM-IV, DSM-IV-TR, DSM-V or ICD-10) and supporting original documentation in order to be considered for enrolment in our Special Class. This documentation being in-date (in the previous 2 years) can be a determining factor in the allocation of places. (Please refer to point four under the heading Criteria).

- Students must have a reasonable expectation of being able to follow the school rules to be considered for enrolment in the Special Class.

- St Augustine’s College provides a Special Class that is an open, inclusive and unrestricted environment and setting. This class is not a high dependency unit.

- Students who apply must have the potential to access the mainstream curriculum or part of the mainstream curriculum with the aid of the support class.
- Students who are enrolled in this class will follow the Junior and Senior Programme (5/6 years). In addition, students with Autism have access to high-quality support for learning along with the Junior Certificate Level 2 Learning Programmes; if appropriate. Students will be registered with their relevant year/class group.
- As per DES Guidelines, the school will not exceed the maximum number of six students per the Special Class. The school will have one Special Class for the academic year 2022-2023, but plans to expand to three Special Classes over the next number of years. To ensure that we provide a mainstream education to all students, we will endeavour that there will be a maximum of two students with an Autism diagnosis per class group.
- Priority will be given to those students who are, in the judgement of the Board of Management, most able to meaningfully participate in mainstream classes and education but would be unable to do so without the support provided by the Autism programme.
- All applications, offers of enrolment and continuing enrolment are subject to the signing of, adherence to and ability to adhere to the school's Code of Behaviour.

- The Board of Management respects the rights of the existing school community and students already enrolled. This will be taken into account when assessing entry into the Special Class.
- Please note that any falsifications of the information and documentations provided in relation to a student's application for the Special Class will lead to the application being null and void.

Aims of the Special Class.

- To meet the educational needs of the students.
- To provide academic support in the areas of literacy and numeracy skills.
- To support the participation of students in mainstream activities, as appropriate.
- To enhance the social and communication skills of the students in St. Augustine's College.
- To develop organisational skills and strategies to enable the students to cope with their everyday life.
- The Special Class will facilitate a transfer programme for new students. The model of inclusion will underpin the work of the Special Class.

Enrolment

The integration of students into mainstream education is the key aim of our Special Class. Although students have their own base room they will, when appropriate to the student's learning, attend mainstream classes both with and without SNA support.

In order to enrol in the Special Class, students must be capable of integrating into mainstream education. Evidence must be provided that the student is capable of integration and a multidisciplinary team must support this evidence.

Each applicant should be supported by a report from the Primary school outlining the student's academic, social, emotional and behavioural needs and outlining the current extent of social inclusion.

This social inclusion operates on the understanding that the intellectual ability of students enrolled in the Special Class would be similar to the profile of the population of students attending the mainstream section of the school and the student would have the ability to integrate into mainstream classes according to individual needs.

Enrolment is a dual enrolment process and is reserved for students who have successfully enrolled in St Augustine's College. Once enrolled in the Special Class, the Admissions Team will review enrolment to the Special Class.

The Board of Management has delegated the Principal and Admissions Team to decide on applications for enrolment to the Special Class. Applicants then have the right to appeal that decision in writing to the Board of Management.

Admissions Team

A specially appointed Admissions Team will review applications and apply the admissions criteria. The admissions team will consist of the Principal of St Augustine's College, the

coordinator of the Special Class (SEN Teacher if not appointed) and Deputy Principals. The role of the admissions team is:

- To consider each individual application in the context of the entry criteria; as outlined in this policy.

- To determine if the individual application meets the entry criteria.

- To ensure a fair and consistent procedure is used when deciding on individual applications to the Special Class at St. Augustine's College.

- The following criteria will apply.
Places will be allocated to:
 - (1) Siblings of existing students
 - (2) Students with a parent working in the school
 - (3) Students from Primary schools located within a radius of 25 km from the school, distances will be calculated using Google-Maps.
 - (4) Nephew and nieces of the Augustinian Order
 - (5) Sons/daughters and grandchildren of past students of the College
 - (6) According to the needs of the student

Criteria

A student may be eligible for admission into Special Class when all of the following entry criteria have been met:

1. The applicant has been registered in First Year. Students who meet criteria for enrolment but are not offered a place for September will remain on that year's waiting list in the event that a mid-school year vacancy should arise.
2. There is a place available in our Special Class. Each year the school in consultation with the SENO (Special Educational Needs Organiser) will determine the number of spaces available in the ASD Unit. Under the Department of Education and Skills guidelines the maximum number of students enrolled in a Special Class is 6 students.
3. The student has a diagnosis of Autism i.e. DSM-IV, DSM-IV-TR, DSM-V or ICD-10, from an ASD Multi-Disciplinary team and the student is recommended for placement in a Special Class or Unit attached to a mainstream secondary school.
4. The inclusion operates on the understanding that the intellectual ability of students enrolling in the Special Class is similar to the profile of the population of students attending the mainstream section of the college and the student would have the ability to integrate into mainstream classes according to individual need.
5. The applicant must also be currently engaged with the appropriate external agencies who offer the appropriate professional support to the applicant and the school.
6. Students who apply must, in the judgement of the Special Class Admissions Team, have an ability to meaningfully participate in mainstream classes and abide by the school's Code of Behaviour in order to be considered.
7. Where the number of students applying and meeting entry criteria, exceeds the number of places available the Admission Criteria will be applied.

Parents will be informed as soon as is practicable which list their child is on.

Parents/Guardians are required to meet with a member of the Special Class Admission Team to discuss their son/daughter's application for enrolment into the Autism programme.

In making a decision, the Principal and the Admissions Team will have regard for relevant Department of Education and Skills guidelines in relation to the Special Class size and staffing provisions and/or any other relevant requirements concerning the provision of necessary documentation and the provision of accommodation, including physical space along with the health and welfare of existing and prospective students.

In certain circumstances and following assessment, St. Augustine's College may be unable to meet the needs of an Autism student on the grounds that:

- (i) They are considered a risk to themselves or others

- (ii) Admission of the student would make it impossible to deliver, or have a serious detrimental effect on, the provision of an educational service to the applicant and to other students.

Parents/guardians of applicant students will be informed of the decision relating to their own child's admission to the Special Class as soon as is practicable. Parents/guardians of students offered a place will inform St Augustine's College of their decision to accept or refuse a place in the Special Class within ten working days of the offer letter being posted. If there has been no contact with the school after this time period, it will be accepted that the offer of a place in the Special Class has been refused.

Once a student has been offered a place they will be invited to participate in a transition programme. St Augustine's College regard students' participation in the transition programme to be essential in ensuring their smooth move to their new environment, as well as in facilitating the SEN Team in making any necessary academic/other reasonable accommodations for the student in a pre-emptive and responsible manner.

Documentation Pertaining to Enrolment in the SpecialClass

A detailed Psychological and Cognitive Assessment noting that the student is assessed to be within the Autistic spectrum within the previous two years must be provided.

The Special Class will not cater for students with profound learning difficulties.

Each application should be supported by a report from the primary school or previous secondary school if transferring, outlining the student's academic, social, emotional and behavioural needs and outlining the current extent of social inclusion.

In order to best support students and without affecting their eligibility for a place in the Special Class and as a student in St Augustine's College we require that we are made aware of:

- Any medications that the applicant student may be in receipt of either at home or in the course of the school day. (This applies to all students attending St Augustine's College, regardless of their association with Autism Unit).
- Any additional medical conditions and/or dietary restrictions/requirements that the individual may have. (This applies to all students attending St Augustine's College, regardless of their association with the Autism Unit).
- In order to determine our suitability for a student we strongly recommend that applicant students have School Transition Reports completed by a psychologist in conjunction with the Primary school and parents/guardians.
- The School Transition Report and most recent (within two years) psychological, cognitive and multi-disciplinary etc. assessments must recommend placement in a Special Class in a mainstream Post-Primary setting.
- Where a School Transition Report is not available, applications should have a "Statement of Need" from the relevant HSE service. In this instance the student's current school will also be asked to complete a School Transition Report. Applications

without a “Statement of Need” or school completed School Transition Report where needed may be affected by their absence.

Transitional Programmes will be arranged on an individual basis with successful applicants in consultation with parents, educational and multi-disciplinary personnel.

Referrals to Board of Management regarding the Special Class enrolment

Applications to the Special Class will be referred to the Board of Management for decision in the following instances:

- Appeal against the Principal’s decision not to offer a place in the Special Class.

Exceptional Cases in relation to Enrolment to the Special Class

Having due regard and respect for the statutory and constitutional rights of parents and their children, the Board of Management reserve the right to refuse any application for enrolment in particular circumstances, which might include, but are not confined to, the following:

1. An established prior record of poor behaviour, in particular, any propensity towards violence and/or aggressive, threatening or disrespectful behaviour towards other students, members of staff and/or school property. This may extend to such behaviours outside of school, as well as in relation to school.
2. An established prior record of bullying, cyber-bullying and/or sexual harassment of other students and/or members of staff. This may extend to such behaviours outside of school, as well as in relation to school.
3. An established prior record of use, possession or distribution of weapons, illegal substances and/or mood altering substances (including, but not confined to, alcohol &

other substances classed as ‘legal highs’). This may extend to such behaviours outside of school, as well as in relation to school.

4. Insufficient educational attainment/coverage of course content to effectively participate in a particular course/subject. i.e. Insufficient subject course content covered in previous school(s) to make sufficient progress viable.
5. Lack of adequate resources to ensure school can cater for particular needs.

Special Class Notification of Vacancies

The Principal will notify the Special Educational Needs Organiser (S.E.N.O.) of the number of vacancies in the existing class in the college for the following year. The S.E.N.O. will also be informed of names of students on the application list.

When the places for the following school year have been filled, the Principal will inform the S.E.N.O. of the students who still remain on the waiting list without places.

The S.E.N.O. will also be informed if vacancies occur during the school year. Vacancies may be filled as they arise during the school year following recommendation from the Admissions Team.

Communication with the Education Partners

This policy was written with the collaboration of students, staff, parents / guardians, the Board of Management.

A copy of this Policy is available from the school website www.staugustines.ie . This information will be communicated to all the relevant parties.

Review of this Statement

This Policy will be developed, monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis and ratified by the Board of Management.

School Management will accept feedback from staff, students along with Parents / Guardians made through the proper use of the appropriate channels i.e. staff meetings, student committees and the Parents Association. This feedback will inform periodic evaluation of the policy by Management.

This policy will be reviewed again in 5 years. This policy was reviewed in February 2021.

This policy is incorporated into the body of School Policy from the date of review.

Ratified by the Board of Management on:

Signature –Chairperson, Board of Management:

Signature – Secretary, Board of Management:
