



**Autism Class  
Admissions Policy  
2023/2024**

### Introductory Statement

St Patrick's BNS is a primary school which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Church, Dublin Diocese. We are a boys' mainstream, vertical primary school with one special class for autism.

The autism class will be funded by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The maximum class size is six pupils. The class is allocated one class teacher and two SNAs subject to NCSE approval.

Taking into account the regulations and programmes of the DES, the rights of the Patron as set out in the Education Act 1998, and the funding available, St Patrick's BNS supports the following principles:

- Inclusion - particularly with reference to the enrolment of children with a disability or other special educational need.
- Equality of access and participation in school.
- Parental choice in relation to enrolment.
- Respect for diversity of values and beliefs.

The Board of Management will not refuse a child on the basis of:

- (a) the gender ground of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- (b) the civil status ground of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- (c) the family status ground of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- (d) the sexual orientation ground of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- (e) the religion ground of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- (f) the disability ground of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- (g) the ground of race of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned, or
- (h) the Traveller community ground of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned

Fulfilling the enrolment criteria does not necessarily ensure enrolment if:

- Sufficient classroom space is not available
- Necessary resources pertaining to the enrolment are not available.

### Vision

Through the establishment of the autism class in St Patrick's BNS, the aim of the Board of Management and the staff is to develop an educational setting which is focused on the needs of all of the children. The Board of Management is committed to providing the highest quality of education for the children concerned.

The Board of Management (BOM) has developed this policy for the autism class in conjunction with the overall admissions policy of the school. This policy is set out in accordance with the provisions of Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000, the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004 and the Education Act 2022.

### Aim

St Patrick's BNS welcomes all pupils for whom we can provide an appropriate education. Our autism class will aim to offer an autism-specific learning environment within a mainstream school. In this setting, we endeavour to nurture self-esteem and promote growth and learning in an atmosphere of inclusion, mutual respect, predictability and calm. Through the provision of a broad curriculum, we will focus on providing a learning environment that is happy, energetic and positive whilst providing for the individual child's special educational needs to enable them to reach their full potential.

### Enrolment Criteria

Enrolment to the autism class will only be available to children who have autism, who, with the supports available in St Patrick's BNS, will have the capacity to at least partially integrate into a mainstream class.

The maximum enrolment in the autism class is six pupils. The BOM reserves the right to enrol less than this if it is deemed in the best interest of the class, the pupils and the school. If the number of children on the list of applicants to enrol exceeds the number of places available, the criteria below will apply in order beginning with number 1 - subject to meeting all the criteria and completing all the procedures outlined in this policy.

1. Children who already attend St. Patrick's Boys' National School, Donabate.

2. Brothers (including step brothers/foster brothers) of children already enrolled in St. Patrick's Boys' National School, Donabate or Scoil Phádraig Cailíní, Donabate.
3. Children of current, permanent staff of St. Patrick's Boys' National School, Donabate.
4. Children of current, permanent staff of Scoil Phádraig Cailíní, Donabate.
5. All other applicants.

In the event that there are two or more pupils tied for a place in any of the selection criteria categories above, the following arrangements will apply:

- The eldest pupil will be given priority. If two applicants have the same date of birth, then a lottery will apply with an independent party present.

St. Patrick's Boys' National School provides education exclusively for boys and may refuse to admit as a pupil a person who is not of the gender provided for by this school.

St. Patrick's Boys' National School is a school whose objective is to provide education in an environment which promotes certain religious values and does not discriminate where it refuses to admit as a pupil a person who is not Catholic and it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

**Please note that fulfilling the enrolment criteria does not necessarily ensure enrolment if sufficient places are not available and/or sufficient classroom space is not available.**

### Procedure for Enrolment

Subject to sufficient places being made available in the autism class, the procedure for enrolment, incorporating the DES and HSE policies are as follows:

1. An enrolment application form should be fully completed by the parents/guardians on behalf of the child.
2. Applications will only be accepted on the basis of a psychological report with a primary diagnosis of autism, provided by a qualified professional. A child must have a primary diagnosis of autism made using the DSM-V or ICD 10 by a psychologist or psychiatrist with the required recommendation for autism-specific/special class within a mainstream school.

3. The child must have the potential to be included in a mainstream class with his age-based cohort before leaving primary school.
4. The parents/guardians of the child must accept and agree to the school's Code of Behaviour and the terms of this policy and the school's Special Class Policy.
5. Receipt of an enrolment application form by the school does not constitute an offer of a place nor does it guarantee a place in the school. It is simply the recording of an expression of interest for admission to our school. Decisions in relation to applications for the enrolment are made by the BOM in accordance with our Admissions Policy.
6. Offer and acceptance of a place: An offer of a place in the autism class will be sent to the parents/guardians of the successful applicants in writing. If the school does not receive notice of acceptance of a place within two weeks, it will be offered to the next child on the placement list for that school year.
7. Placement: Each child in the autism class will be assigned to an age appropriate mainstream class for integration purposes. Every opportunity will be used to promote inclusion in mainstream classes provided the child is ready for this step and has the necessary support in place.

### Role of the Admissions Team

The Admission Team will:

- Ascertain how many places are to be filled in the Autism Class. The maximum number of pupils in the class will be six.
- Review all documentation relevant to a child applying for a place in the Autism Class
- Verify the class' suitability in meeting the needs of the child
- Verify that there is the required recommendation from a psychologist for placement in a special class in a mainstream school.

- Verify the suitability of the child for potential, meaningful integration in an age appropriate mainstream class.
- Identify qualifying applicants with reference to these criteria.
- Prioritise each qualifying applicant with reference to selection criteria.
- Make a recommendation based on these findings to the Board of Management.

### Role of the Board of Management

The Board of Management is responsible for and must respect the rights of the existing school community and, in particular, the children already enrolled. The Board of Management has the right to endorse or overrule any decision made by the Admissions Team. In particular, the Board of Management reserves the right to refuse enrolment if they believe the school cannot meet the needs of a particular child. All unsuccessful qualifying applicants will be placed on a waiting list, in accordance with the above criteria for places that may become available.

All unsuccessful applicants have the right to appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 within 42 days from the date of the decision by the Board of Management. The waiting list is valid for vacancies which occur in the current school year only.

The Board of Management will monitor the implementation of all aspects of this policy. This policy will be amended and updated as required.

### Discharge from the Autism Class

It is school policy to facilitate the discharge of pupils from the autism class once they have reached the age of twelve. Pupils who reach the age of thirteen after September 30th in any year, will be permitted to complete the academic year. It will be the responsibility of the SENO and the parents to find an appropriate post primary setting in which to allow the child to complete his education.

St Patrick's BNS will facilitate all transfer of records/reports, as well as assist with any information required with regard to the pupil and the school will, with written consent, forward all relevant reports and assessments to the next setting.

Discharge may also be recommended after the first and/or any subsequent year if, following psychological assessment and consultation with the parents/guardians, it is felt that the placement is no longer appropriate and serves the best interests of the child. Discharge may also occur if a pupil is deemed ready for full-time integration into a mainstream class. The Board of Management has the right to overrule any decisions made in regard to discharge from the autism class.

*This policy is subject to the review by the Board of Management annually.*

**Ratification and Communication:**

**Signed:**

**Date:**