



School Enrolment Policy

“The Board” refers the Board of Management of ABACAS Kilbarrack.

“The school” refers to ABACAS Kilbarrack, Greendale Road, Kilbarrack.

“The Parent(s)” refers to the Parent(s), Guardian(s), Foster-Parents and/or Carers of the student attending or applying to ABACAS Kilbarrack.

“The DES” refers to the Department of Education and Skills.

“Department Circulars” refers to circular letters for all schools issued from time to time by the DES and available at www.education.ie

The use of term “days” implies calendar days unless otherwise stated.

Ratified by Board of Management – 12/02/2019 Policy Review – February 2019



ABACAS Enrolment Policy

ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School under the patronage of Autism Ireland is a Special School funded by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) for children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder and complex needs. The school welcomes any referrals for enrolment to the school for any student aged between 4 and 18 years of age who has a confirmed primary diagnosis of autism or has a single diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum (as per DSM-IV or ICD-10 criteria by a certified psychologist)¹ in accordance with the policies and procedures more fully defined below. This enrolment policy is set out in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000, the Disabilities Act 2005, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and the Rules for National Schools as updated by relevant DES circulars. Parents who require clarification of any aspect of the policy should contact the Chairperson of the school's Board in writing or the Principal. Contact details can be obtained through the main school reception (01) 8396705.

General Information

Our mission statement states:

Our mission is to create opportunities through education, in an environment that is caring, supportive and joyful, improving the lives of children and young adults with autism and the lives of their families. To this end we value:

- *Student centred education that celebrates each child's uniqueness*
- *Early intervention and assessment*
- *Individualised, evidence based education*
- *Partnership with families*
- *Participation in Society*

ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School offers a child-centred autism specific education, which draws on a range of evidence based instructional principles and methodologies (Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA), Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH), Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Discrete Trial Training), in line with the Department of Education policy. Students have access to a broad, balanced, relevant and developmental range of curricular experiences in each curricular area as set out in *The Primary School Curriculum (1999)*. Educational programmes are designed to meet each child's individual needs and facilitate the development of each child's unique potential. Our aim is to develop skills for success in the home, school and the wider community. Training in the basic skills of communication, self-care and key social competences form an integral part of the school programme at all levels. ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School depends on the grants and teacher resources provided by the DES. It also operates within the regulations laid down by the DES. ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School has regard for the resources and funding available to meet the individual needs of students and the number of children per class. Children are divided into classes according to their age, skill strengths, developmental need and their communicative ability.

¹ Assessment and classification of autism or autistic spectrum disorder by a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist using DSM-IV or ICD-10 criteria OR multi-disciplinary assessment of same by a professional team [including a clinical psychologist/ educational psychologist].



Current school population

Presently, the school can cater for up to 36 children across 6 classrooms and has a staff comprised of the Principal, Deputy Principal, AP2 Post holder, a Behaviour Analyst, 6 Teachers, 32 SNAs, and an Office Administrator. Our Early Intervention Class has an allocation of one Teacher and two SNA's. The Health Service Executive (HSE), St. Michael's House, Beechpark and Daughters of Charity provide occupational therapy services and speech and language support services and a psychological service, on a limited basis. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) also provides a limited service to the school. Behavioural support services are offered from within the school community.

Early Intervention Class

Children with a diagnosis of Autism, living in North Dublin, who wish to apply for a place in the Early Intervention Class must apply between **April 1st - 31st** in the year preceding entry. Children must be 3 years old on the date of entry.

After our Behaviour Analyst confirms suitability of a student (see "Service Expectations" below), places offered for the next school year will be prioritised in the following order:

1. Children with siblings attending ABACAS;
2. Proximity to the school¹.

If a child is not selected for the programme, families may re-apply the following year provided the child is within the age range.

A place in the E.I.C. does **not** guarantee a place in the main ABACAS school. A child may stay in the EIC for a maximum of 2 years but a child cannot be retained in the EI Class beyond the school year in which they turn 5, as all children are legally required to be enrolled in formal education the year they turn 6.

Enrolment Main School

Before an application is made for a place in the main school, Parents should ensure that:

- The child will be at least 4 years of age on or before the 1st of September of the year in which they are applying to enrol.
- The child has a recent (within the last 2 years) documented and confirmed diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum²
- The Enrolment Application Form is completed in full

¹Places will be allocated on the basis of proximity to school which will be determined by the shortest distance by public road between the school gates and the gates/road entrance to the child's home as measured on Google Maps.

² Assessment and classification of autism or autistic spectrum disorder by a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist using DSM-IV or ICD-10 criteria OR multi-disciplinary assessment of same by a professional team [including a clinical psychologist.



- All supporting documentation that ensures a complete overview of the child is attached to the application form including (though not limited to): current pre-school/school placement reports, home tuition reports, psychological reports, medical reports, speech and language reports, occupational therapy reports and /or behavioural support plans.
- The child is living within a reasonable distance of the school and travel time is within acceptable parameters between home and school facilities³

The Board of ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School recognises that Parents have a desire and a legal right to request that their child be enrolled in a school of their choice. The Board also recognises that the decision to admit new entrants into the school must be made with the understanding of the resources available within the school community to meet the unique needs of each child admitted and, in particular, the children already enrolled in the school. Decisions as to enrolment therefore require balanced judgements, guided by the principles of natural justice and acting in the best interests of children affected, or potentially affected by such decisions.

The school enrolment policy also upholds the framework of the relevant legislation set forth for special schools. Attention is drawn to Section 2 of the EPSN ACT 2004, which provides that a child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive setting unless such an arrangement is inconsistent with the best interests of the child or with the effective provision of education for those children with whom the child is to be educated.

These guidelines inform this enrolment policy. Enrolment in ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School will be confined to pupils for whom there is clear evidence that enrolment in a special school rather than in a mainstream school is in the child's best interest. This is determined by the Board in conjunction with the Principal with a comprehensive review of all supporting reports (such as one written by a qualified educational or clinical psychologist that state that the applicant child has a diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum based on the criteria specified in ICD 10 or DSM V). This documentation must assert that it is in the child's best interest that s/he be enrolled in a special school for children with autism and complex needs.

Currently, the school caters for 36 pupils (plus 6 in our Early Intervention Programme). Children join the school in September/October, subject to school policy, available space and the school's capability to provide for the child's specific needs. Admission at any other time throughout the school year will solely depend on the discretion of the Board having regards for the necessary resources, staff and physical space available.

Procedures for Enrolment

Applications are accepted between **February 1st – 28th** for the next school year. All applications must be submitted by post to the school office by **3pm on 28th February**. Applications received after this date will be considered late applications and will be returned with advice to apply the following year. Enrolment Application Forms can be downloaded from the school website.

Available places will be allocated to new students in the following order:

³ Reasonable distance will be defined in accordance with the DES transportation department and the normal special school transport scheme for pupils.



- 1) Younger siblings of students already attending ABACAS Kilbarrack (including step-siblings and foster children resident at the same address)
- 2) Students who finished our Early Intervention Programme in the term prior to the date of entry.
- 3) Students living closest to the school (See note 1)

In any year where the number of applications exceeds the number of places available, and where category 1 and 2 requirements have been upheld, priority will be given to child who lives in closest proximity to the school which will be determined by the shortest distance by public road between the school gates and the gates/road entrance to the child's home as measured on Google Maps. Applicants will be informed if there is a place available within 21 days of the final application date. Application documentation will be returned to unsuccessful applicants with advice to re-apply the following year. Written offers of school places will be distributed to applicant Parents.

All applications must include:

- i) Enrolment Application Form
- ii) Written Confirmation that the child has diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum (within the last 2 years) and any other relevant documents including psychological reports, medical reports, speech and language reports, occupational therapy reports and/or behavioural support plans
- iii) Original Birth Cert
- iv) Current pre-school/school placement reports (and home tuition reports, if relevant)
- v) Verification of address by way of original Utility Bill or other for all new families to school.⁴

Any application form not accompanied by the written confirmation of the diagnosis or other relevant documentation will be returned and only dealt with when the full documentation is presented. If the school does not receive the necessary documentation by the last day of February, the application will be returned to the applicant.

No guarantee of a school place is given or implied by acceptance of an application form.

Parents must respond in writing to accept the offer of a school placement within 16 days of school issuing confirmation. Failure to respond in writing by the specified date will result in their child's place being offered to another student. Parents cannot defer a place which has been offered to them. All documentation will be returned to unsuccessful applicants – **there is no waiting list**. Parents, who are unsuccessful in securing a place in ABACAS in any year, can re-apply in the next school year.

Authority of School Principal

The school Principal is authorised by the Board to take decisions on pupil intake consistent with this Policy Document. In line with the Education Welfare Act 2000, these decisions will be communicated to parents in writing within 21 calendar days of closing date for applications.



⁴To ensure the authenticity of applications the Board will ask all new families to verify place of residence by way of original utility bill or other documentation.

Appeals

In the event that an application for enrolment in ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School is declined, a parent/guardian may appeal the decision to the Board, in writing, addressed to the Chairperson of the Board, within 21 days of being notified of the decision (see previous under Authority of School Principal). Refer to Section 29 of the *Education Act 1998* for further information on appeals.

Transition into ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School

On occasion, children may transfer into ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School from a another school or community service provider. Should this be the case, the transition period to ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School will be determined at the discretion of the Principal/Behaviour Analyst and teacher in consultation with the family and previous education providers. The decision of type and length of transition will be based on the individual needs of the child and the overall welfare of current students. Please refer to our policy on Reduced Hours regarding reasons for a shortened school day for transitioning students.

Service Expectations

The Principal and/or the Behaviour Analyst will meet with Parents to discuss their child's strengths and needs, profile the supports that may be required as well as the suitability of enrolment. Where the supports required for success go beyond those already in place in the school, the Board reserves the right to refuse admission and direct the Parents to more appropriate education, care and/or medical placement. School staff will support the family in accessing alternative provision in a timely manner from another service provider. As indicated above, all reports (including existing school, psychological, medical, speech/language, occupational therapy, behavioural or others) will be considered in making the final decision on suitability of placement. The Principal/Behaviour Analyst may also consult with the professionals who prepared reports on the child and the professionals with whom the school has an existing relationship before making a recommendation to Parents regarding the perceived suitability, or otherwise, of enrolling the child in the school.

On all occasions the school management will have regard to the funding and resources available when making decisions of admittance. If the Board considers that additional resources are required to meet the particular educational/safety needs of the child, an application will be made to the DES via the Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) to provide same. A case-conference may be called to discuss the needs of a particular child if appropriate. Ongoing placement within ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School may depend on the provision of specialist resources.

Students enrolled in the school may also be offered the opportunity of integration in an age-appropriate mainstream class should their skills be suitable for such an arrangement. The nature of this integration will be determined by the Principal/Teacher and participating staff, in consultation with the child's Parents and the Principal of the selected mainstream school.



Placement Review

Occasionally, a concern regarding the suitability of a student's continued attendance at the school may arise. In such circumstances, a review of the school's ability to continue to meet the child's needs, safety and the safety of others may be necessary. Any such review will be undertaken by a committee appointed by the Board in conjunction with the Principal, Behaviour Analyst and other relevant staff members. Parents will be kept informed of any concerns that might arise in relation to their child's continued attendance at the school at the earliest opportunity. Parents will also be given an opportunity to engage in a discussion surrounding the placement of the child and concerns that arise from the case itself. In the event that it is determined that the child is not suitably placed in the school, having regard for the realistic service options available at the time, the Board may request a multi-disciplinary team assessment be carried out to determine the best options for the specific child. If it is determined that the school is not in position to meet the needs of a student, a brief period of suspension may be necessary to develop a plan. This will be carried out according to the guidelines set forth by the National Education Welfare Board. If the school is still unable to accommodate for a student's behavioural needs, the Principal may have to initiate the procedures for exclusion/expulsion according to the guidelines set out in "Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools", developed by the NEWB.

Removal of Student from School Roll

ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School is obliged under *The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000* to keep an accurate and updated account of the enrolment and attendance of students. Such records are subject to monitoring by the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB). Schools also have an obligation to inform the NEWB of the absence of any student for a period in excess of 20 days in any school year. A child's name can be removed from the school roll if they are not attending on a regular consistent basis.

Where a child is absent from ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School during part of a school day, or for a school day or more than a school day, the parent of such child shall, in accordance with procedures specified in the code of behaviour of the school, notify the Principal of the school of the reasons for the child's absence. The Board shall not remove a child's name from the roll solely on the grounds that the child concerned is prevented from receiving a certain minimum education due to illness or other legitimate reason.

The re-enrolment of a student who has been removed from the roll is a decision for the Board to be taken in accordance with this enrolment policy and all relevant DES documents and/or policies.

Code of Behaviour

Parents of children enrolled in ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School, the members of the Board, staff members and external consultants and volunteers are required to co-operate and support the school's Code of Behaviour and all other policies and curricular organisation approved by the school's Board. The Board trusts that Parents will also work collaboratively with school staff as they assist the students themselves in their effort to uphold the student Code of Behaviour. The Board also expects that Parents/Guardians of children seeking to enter the school demonstrate the same positive collaboration and support to the Staff and Board.



A copy of the school's Code of Behaviour will be provided to all parents/guardians of children who are being offered places. Parent/Guardians must read the Code of Behaviour and confirm in writing that it is acceptable to them.

Policy Review

It is agreed by all parties that this enrolment policy will be reviewed each year to ensure that it is kept up to date and that it retains its relevance. Ongoing evaluation and new approaches to education, DES guidelines and agreements may require this document be modified from time to time.

Signed: _____

Brian Murnane, Chairperson

Board of Management, ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School

Ratified by the Board of Management on: _____

Next Review Period: _____