School for Autistic Children, Drogheda

Admission Policy of Drogheda ABACAS Special School 2027/2028

School Address: Priest Lane, Congress Ave, Drogheda, Co Louth A92TK52

Roll number: 20374G

School Patron: Autism Ireland

1. Introduction

This Admission Policy complies with the requirements of the Education Act 1998, the Education Drogheda ABACAS Special School Act 2018, and the Equal Status Act 2000. In drafting this policy, the board of management of the school has consulted with school staff, the school patron and with parents of children attending the school.

The policy was approved by the school patron on 1st October 2026. It is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy on request to any person who requests it.

The relevant dates and timelines for Drogheda ABACAS Special School admission process are set out in the school's annual admission notice which is published annually on the school's website at least one week before the commencement of the admission process for the school year concerned.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the annual admission notice for the school year concerned.

The application form for admission is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy on request to any person who requests it.

2. Characteristic spirit and general objectives of the school

Drogheda ABACAS Special School with the approval of the Minister for Education and Youth, provides an education exclusively for autistic students with complex needs. Drogheda ABACAS Special School believes in inclusiveness and welcomes students of all backgrounds, nationalities, denominations and gender, where they learn in a safe and happy environment. We actively seek collaboration with parents in the spirit of working together towards helping students achieve the fullness of their potential while acknowledging their highly individualised needs. Our school provides a safe physical and social environment that reinforces a sense of belonging to the school community and wider society. Relationships are at the heart of teaching and learning, with a whole school emphasis on understanding and connection

We strive to enable every student to realise their full potential regardless of any aspect of their identity or background. Our school promotes a fully inclusive education that recognises the beliefs and values held by students, parents and staff. The school welcomes 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 criteria by a certified psychologist) in accordance with the policies and procedures more fully defined below.

Drogheda ABACAS Special School is under the patronage of Autism Ireland, funded by the Department of Education and Youth, and has regard for the resources and funding available to meet the individual needs of students and the number of children per class. As a school we place emphasis on engagement, independence, functional communication, cognitive skill development, social competence, play skill development, generalization of skills and proactive approaches to regulation & dysregulation.

This will be done using a multi-disciplinary approach to service delivery and a strong focus on evidence-based instructional principles and methodologies. Students will 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), The Redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum, Junior & Senior Cycle programmes. 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. Drogheda ABACAS Special School follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the Department of Education & Youth, which may be amended from time to time in accordance with Sections 9 and 30 of the Education Act (1998).

3. Admission Statement

Drogheda ABACAS Special School will not discriminate in its admission of a student to the school on any of the following:

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

(h) the Traveller community ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned, or
(i) the ground that the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned has special educational needs

As per section 61 (3) of the Education Act 1998, 'gender ground', 'civil status ground', 'family status ground', 'sexual orientation ground', 'religion ground', 'disability ground', ' discriminate', 'ground of race' and 'Traveller community ground' shall be construed in accordance with section 3 of the Equal Status Act 2000.

Drogheda ABACAS Special School will cooperate with the National Council for Special Education in the performance by the Council of its functions under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 relating to the provision of education to children with special educational needs, including in particular by the provision and operation of a special class or classes when requested to do so by the Council.

Drogheda ABACAS Special School will comply with any direction served on the patron or the board, as the case may be, under section 37A and any direction served on the board under section 67(4B) of the Education Act.

Special School
Drogheda ABACAS Special School is a school which, with the approval of the Minister for Education & Youth, provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories of special educational needs specified by the Minister and does not discriminate in relation to the admission of a student who does not have the category of needs specified.

Children and young people are eligible for enrolment in a special school for autistic students with complex needs when the following is provided in support of such an application:

Professional report(s) outlining:
• Diagnosis of special educational needs (e.g. Autism: DSM IV/V or ICD 10/11 (psychologist, psychiatrist, multi-disciplinary report)

AND

• A demonstration of the understanding of complexity of the child's overall level of need/s evidenced in the professional reports

AND

• Given the severity or complexity of the child's support needs, a clear professional recommendation as to what educational placement type would be most appropriate to best meet the child's needs, along with the rationale for same

AND
• A letter of eligibility from the NCSE confirming that the child is known to them and that the child has the required diagnosis and recommendation for a special class for (insert category of special educational need e.g. autism)

4. Categories of Special Educational Needs catered for in the school/special class

Drogheda ABACAS Special School with the approval of the Minister for Education & Youth, provides an education exclusively for Autistic Children with Complex Needs.

5. Admission of Students

This school shall admit each student seeking admission except where –

a) the school is oversubscribed (please see section 6 below for further details)

b) A parent of a student, when required by the principal in accordance with section 23(4) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, fails to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour of the school is acceptable to him or her and that he or she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student

Drogheda ABACAS Special School provides an education exclusively for Autistic Children with Complex Needs and may refuse admission to a student, where the student does not have the specified category of special educational needs provided for by this school.

Application Process

1) The child will be 4 years old on or before 1st September of the year in which it is proposed to enrol the child

2) Professional report(s) outlining:
   • Diagnosis of special educational needs (e.g. Autism: DSM IV/V or ICD 10/11 (psychologist, psychiatrist, multi-disciplinary report)

   AND

   • A demonstration of the understanding of complexity of the child's overall level of need/s evidenced in the professional reports

   AND

   • Given the severity or complexity of the child's support needs, a clear professional recommendation as to what educational placement type would be most appropriate to best meet the child's needs, along with the rationale for same

   AND

• A letter of eligibility from the NCSE confirming that the child is known to them and that the child has the required diagnosis and recommendation for a special for Autistic Children with Complex Needs

3) Fully completed Application Form signed by 1 or both parents/ guardians

4) Copy of original Birth Certificate for the child.

5) Applications will be accepted from applicants with a Louth or Meath postal address living no more than 20 km distance from the school (Eircode A92 TK52). Distance will be calculated using Google Maps with tolls disabled.

6) Proof of address in the form of a utility bill and/or bank statement with an Eircode in the name of one/both parents/legal guardians which must be dated no later than three months prior to the closing date for receipt of applications.

Please Note:

- Only completed applications will be considered. Incomplete applications will not be considered under any circumstances. Applications awaiting further documentation will only be considered if all documentation is received by the close date for receipt of applications as specified in the annual admissions notice.
- Fulfilling of the enrolment criteria does not ensure enrolment if sufficient classroom places are not available

6. Oversubscription

In the event that the school is oversubscribed, the school will, when deciding on applications for admission, apply the following selection criteria in the order listed below to those applications that are received within the timeline for receipt of applications as set out in the school's annual admission notice:

1) Priority will be given to the age of the student most suited to the age of the class in which the space is available as set out in Admissions Notice 2027/2028.

2) Sibling(s) of Students who:
   - Have an exclusive recommendation in their Relevant Report for a placement in a special school, and
   - Have a sibling(s) enrolled in the school at the time of application, and
   - Will be 4 years of age for 1St September and will be less than 18 years of age by 1st September for the school year during which they would be enrolled.

In the event that there are two or more students tied for a place or places in any of the selection criteria categories above (the number of applicants exceeds the number of remaining places), the following arrangements will apply:

Where there is a tie for placement after all conditions above have been applied priority will be given to applicants by lottery.

7. What will not be considered or taken into account

In accordance with section 62(7)(e) of the Education Act, the school will not consider or take into account any of the following in deciding on applications for admission or when placing a student on a waiting list for admission to the school:

(a) a student's prior attendance at a pre-school or pre-school service, including naíonraí,

(b) the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;

(c) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude;

(d) the occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a student's parents;

(e) a requirement that a student, or his or her parents, attend an interview, open day or other meeting as a condition of admission;

(f) a student's connection to the school by virtue of a member of his or her family attending or having previously attended the school;

(g) the date and time on which an application for admission was received by the school,

8. Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to Drogheda ABACAS Special School will be based on the following:

- Our school's admission policy
- The school's annual admission notice (where applicable)
- The information provided by the applicant in the school's official application form received during the period specified in our annual admission notice for receiving applications

Selection criteria that are not included in our school admission policy will not be used to make a decision on an application for a place in our school.

9. Notifying applicants of decisions

Applicants will be informed in writing as to the decision of the school, within the timeline outlined in the annual admissions notice.

If a student is not offered a place in our school, the reasons why they were not offered a place will be communicated in writing to the applicant, including, where applicable, details of the student's ranking against the selection criteria and details of the student's place on the waiting list for the school year concerned.

Applicants will be informed of the right to seek a review/right of appeal of the school's decision

10. Acceptance of an offer of a place by an applicant

In accepting an offer of admission from Drogheda ABACAS Special School, you must indicate—

(i) whether or not you have accepted an offer of admission for another school or schools. If you have accepted such an offer, you must also provide details of the offer or offers concerned and

(ii) whether or not you have applied for and awaiting confirmation of an offer of admission from another school or schools, and if so, you must provide details of the other school or schools concerned.

11. Circumstances in which offers may not be made or may be withdrawn

An offer of admission may not be made or may be withdrawn by Drogheda ABACAS Special School where—

(i) it is established that information contained in the application is false or misleading.
(ii) an applicant fails to confirm acceptance of an offer of admission on or before the date set out in the annual admission notice of the school.
(iii) the parent of a student, when required by the principal in accordance with section 23(4) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, fails to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour of the school is acceptable to him or her and that he or she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student; or
(iv) an applicant has failed to comply with the requirements of 'acceptance of an offer' as set out in section 10 above,

12. Sharing of Data with other schools

Applicants should be aware that section 66(6) of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 allows for the sharing of certain information between schools in order to facilitate the efficient admission of students. Section 66(6) allows a board to provide a patron or another board of management with a list of the students in relation to whom—

(i) an application for admission to the school has been received,
(ii) an offer of admission to the school has been made, or
(iii) an offer of admission to the school has been accepted.

The list may include any or all of the following:

(i) the date on which an application for admission was received by the school;
(ii) the date on which an offer of admission was made by the school;
(iii) the date on which an offer of admission was accepted by an applicant;
(iv) a student's personal details including his or her name, address, date of birth and personal public service number (within the meaning of section 262 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005).

13. Waiting list in the event of oversubscription

In the event of there being more applications to the school year concerned than places available, a waiting list of students whose applications for admission to Drogheda ABACAS

Special School were unsuccessful due to the school being oversubscribed will be compiled and will remain valid for the school year in which admission is being sought.

Placement on the waiting list of Drogheda ABACAS Special School is in the order of priority assigned to the students' applications after the school has applied the selection criteria in accordance with this admission policy.

Offers of any subsequent places that become available for and during the school year in relation to which admission is being sought will be made to those students on the waiting list, in accordance with the order of priority in relation to which the students have been placed on the list.

14. Late Applications

All applications for admission received after the closing date as outlined in the annual admission notice will be considered and decided upon in accordance with our school's admissions policy, the Education Admissions to School Act 2018 and any regulations made under that Act.

15. Procedures for admission of students to other years and during the school year

The procedures of the school in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the school to classes or years other than the school's intake group are as follows:

Places will be offered to applicants where vacancies arise in age and/or needs appropriate classroom in the school.

The procedures of the school in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the school, after the commencement of the school year in which admission is sought, are as follows:

In the event of there being more applications to the school year concerned than places available, a waiting list of students whose applications for admission to Drogheda ABACAS Special School were unsuccessful will be compiled. This waiting list will remain valid for the school year in which admission is being sought. Placement on the waiting list of Drogheda ABACAS Special School is in the order of priority assigned to the student's applications after the school has applied the selection criteria in accordance with this admission policy.

16. Declaration in relation to the non-charging of fees

This rule applies to all schools.

The board of Drogheda ABACAS Special School or any persons acting on its behalf will not charge fees for or seek payment or contributions (howsoever described) as a condition of-

(a) an application for admission of a student to the school, or
(b) the admission or continued enrolment of a student in the school.

Exceptions apply only in relation to fee charging post primary schools, the boarding element in Boarding Schools and admission to post leaving cert or further education courses run by post-primary schools.

17. Arrangements regarding students not attending religious instruction

Drogheda ABACAS Special School is a non-denominational ethos school and in keeping with that ethos, children of all faiths or none are welcome to apply to the school The school does not offer classes or individual instruction in any faith.

18. Reviews/appeals

Review of decisions by the board of Management

The parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may request the board 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 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.

Right of appeal

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, the parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may appeal a decision of this school to refuse admission.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(i) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due to the school being oversubscribed.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(ii) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due a reason other than the school being oversubscribed.

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. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

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. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

Appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 will be considered and determined by an independent appeals committee appointed by the Minister for Education.

The timeline within which such an appeal must be made and the other requirements applicable to such appeals 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 and Skills.

19. Implementation and Review

This Policy will be reviewed, as deemed necessary, by the Board of Management.

20. Policy Ratification

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Drogheda ABACAS Special School on 1st October 2026

Signed: _____ **Date 1/10/2026**

(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Signed: Michelle Mc Hugh **Date 1/10/2026**

(Principal)