**Merlin Woods Primary School**

**ASD Class Enrolment Policy**

General Introduction

Every student must apply for admission to the school in the normal manner as outlined in the School’s General Admissions Policy. All students will be subject to the terms and conditions of the general Merlin Woods Primary School Enrolment Policy and both policies will be used in conjunction together. A separate enrolment form must be completed for admission to the ASD class. This application form will be available from the School office and our website, www.merlinwoods.com.

The decision to provide a special class for children with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder in Merlin Woods Primary School was taken by the Board of Management of the school in conjunction with the Principal and Staff in May 2011. The decision was taken with a view to provide an education in a mainstream setting for children who have an Autistic Spectrum Disorder and who fulfil the enrolment criteria. The decision was taken primarily to cater for children resident in The Good Shepherd Parish (Doughiska, Roscam and Ardaun). It was decided to open a second ASD class when we moved into our permanent building in 2014.

The Board of Management notes that it is open to any primary school to set up such a class.

Merlin Woods Primary School is a mainstream co-educational primary school with two classgroups at most class levels and with a current enrolment of approximately 430 pupils. Merlin Woods Primary School is a co-educational Roman Catholic primary school, under the Patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Galway. The ASD classes at Merlin Woods Primary School are classes for children with ASD who have been recommended for placement in an ASD class in a mainstream primary school and who have the potential to integrate into a mainstream, age appropriate class. All placements will be reviewed annually in order to ensure that the placement continues to be appropriate for each child. **The maximum class size is 6 pupils.**

All applications must be accompanied by an assessment carried out by an Educational/Clinical Psychologist, approved by the Department of Education and Skills, recommending the candidate as suitable for consideration for entry to an Autism Spectrum Disorder Unit. The child must have a primary diagnosis of Autism / Autistic Spectrum Disorder without significant intellectual impairment made using the DSM-V or ICD 10 by the psychologist or a member of the Multi-Disciplinary Team.

The enrolment policy of Merlin Woods Primary School supports the principles of:

* *inclusiveness*, particularly with reference to the enrolment of children with a disability or other special educational need;
* *equality* of access and *participation* in the school;
* *parental choice* in relation to enrolment and
* *respect* for the diversity of *values, beliefs, traditions, languages* and *ways of life* in society.

Therefore, no child will be refused access to Merlin Woods Primary School for reasons of ethnicity, special educational needs, disability, accent, language, traveller status, asylum seeker/refugee status, religious or political beliefs or values, family or social circumstances.

Our Aims

We aim to offer a positive meaningful educational experience, which allows the child to develop to his/her full learning potential in an environment that offers clarity, predictability and calm. Our ASD class offers an autism specific learning environment within a mainstream co-educational national school. This setting facilitates optimum inclusion in mainstream education as part of the school community as appropriate, with regard to levels of general learning disability, resources and suitability for such inclusion. We wish to provide a broad curriculum which focuses on the abilities and strengths of each child while supporting their areas of need.

Application Procedures

The Enrolment Application must be accompanied by all of the following supporting documentation supplied by parents:

• The child must have a diagnosis of Autism / Autistic Spectrum Disorder made using the DSM-IV/V or ICD 10 by the psychologist or team.

• Original birth certificate.

• A written psychological assessment /report or a written report from a multi-disciplinary team must be provided. A multi-disciplinary team may consist of a Clinical Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech & Language Therapist, Social Worker and a Physiotherapist. Please note all reports in operation on a child should be provided to the school for assessment by the Admissions Team.

• There must be a recommendation by the relevant professionals in the report that a special class placement in a mainstream school is both necessary and suitable for the child. In this regard it should be noted that the academic ability of the child will be taken into account when considering an application and will be subject to continuous assessment and review.

*Stage 1: Expression of Interest*

Parents who wish to enrol pupils in Merlin Woods Primary School ASD classes for September are required to have filled out and submitted an initial Expression of Interest form by 31 January in the year they wish to enrol. This form is available from the school and on the download section of our school website, www.merlinwoods.com. Expression of Interest forms will only be accepted during the months September to January in the year immediately prior to enrolment, ie we do not take applications years in advance, only in the year prior to enrolment.

*Stage 2: Letter of Offer*

Places will be allocated in accordance to the Decision Making process and criteria outlined on Page 4 of this policy. Parents who have been allocated a place will receive a formal offer of a place and an Enrolment Form. Applicants must accept this offer in writing by returning the completed Enrolment Form, along with proof of address (a utility bill issued within the previous three months), the child’s original Birth/Adoption Certificate and all required finalised reports by the date specified on the enrolment offer.

Pupils will, as a rule, only be enrolled to classes during the month of September. Children may be admitted to a class during the school year provided they show proof of being newly resident in the area in the previous three months and subject to school policy, availability and space.

*Stage 3: Waiting List*

Unsuccessful applicants will be placed on a waiting list. Should places become available through non-acceptance or cancellation of a place, places will be offered in accordance with the criteria set out below.

Decision Making Process

*In the event that there are more applications than places allow for, the following criteria will be used, in conjunction with the requirements above:*

* *Current pupils in the school*
* *Siblings of pupils already in the school, in order of age, oldest first.*
* *Children of staff members, in order of age, oldest first.*
* *Children residing in Doughiska, Roscam, Ardaun.* (a recent utility bill within 3 previous months or other such proof of address will be required), *in order of age, oldest first.*
* *Children who are not currently residing in Doughiska, Roscam*, *Ardaun* (a recent utility bill within 3 previous months or other such proof of address will be requested), *in order of age, oldest first.*

In determining enrolment the Board of Management shall take into account Department of Education and Skills regulations regarding staffing provisions, maximum class size and maximum class average and any other relevant requirements concerning accommodation such as physical space, the educational needs and rights of children already enrolled, multi-grade classes and the presence of children with special educational/behavioural needs.

If places become available in the Senior ASD class, priority will be given to pupils in the Junior ASD class to move up to the Senior ASD classes if required, before places are offered to other pupils. Vacant places will then be prioritised in the Junior ASD Class.

The Board of Management shall at all times have regard for the Health, Safety and Welfare of pupils and teachers and others who work in the school, and all decisions made by the Board will give paramount importance to this obligation on the Board.

We wish to inform all parents and guardians that this enrolment policy has been drawn up in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Equal Status Act for Persons with special Needs 2004. In this policy the term parent includes Guardians, Adoptive and Foster Parents and any adult officially deemed to be in loco parentis.

Provision of Key Information by Parents

Certain information is required when children are being enrolled. A specific enrolment form is provided by the Board of Management for this purpose. Applications will only be accepted on the basis of a fully completed and accurate Enrolment Form. This form must be accompanied by the original Birth/Adoption Certificate. This will be photocopied and the original will be returned in due course.

An incomplete/inaccurate Enrolment Form constitutes an invalid Enrolment Application.

**Pupils Transferring**

Children transferring from another school who are newly resident in the area within the previous three months, may be admitted to the ASD Class during the school year, subject to school policy and space, in line with the criteria above, and fitting the age profile of the class. Children already resident in and attending school in Galway, who wish to transfer to Merlin Woods Primary School, may only enrol in September, and if places are available. It is a requirement of the Board of Management that information concerning attendance and the child’s educational progress be communicated between schools. (Section 28, Education Welfare Act 2000).

As previously stated, all available information must be provided on the relevant sections of the Enrolment Form. An incomplete/inaccurate Enrolment Form constitutes an invalid Enrolment Application.

Appeals

Parents who are dissatisfied with an enrolment decision, may appeal to the Board of Management. It must be addressed, in writing, to the Chairperson, stating the grounds for the appeal, and lodged within ten days of receiving the refusal. Parents, if unhappy with the result of this appeal, may appeal to the Department of Education and Skills on the official form provided by the Department. This appeal must be lodged within 42 days of receipt of the refusal from the school to enrol. Details on appealing decisions on enrolment under section 29 of the Education Act (as amended by Section 4 of the Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2007), are available on the Department’s website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) (Circular 22/02 - Processing of an Appeal).

All appeals and decisions of school management will be dealt with in an equitable manner, and in accordance with fair procedures.

**Code of Behaviour**

Children enrolled in Merlin Woods Primary School are required to co-operate with and support the School Code of Behaviour as well as all other school policies on curriculum, organisation, & management. The Board of Management places Parents/ Guardians responsible for ensuring that their child co-operates with said policies in an age-appropriate way. In signing the enrolment form you are agreeing to the terms of the school Code of Behaviour and you are undertaking to co-operate with and support the school in implementing this Code of Behaviour, both in its general application and in its application to your child.

**Evaluation**

The BOM will monitor the implementation of all aspects of the policy and review and amend the Policy as required with particular emphasis placed upon

* Effective management of the application process
* Clarity and transparency relating to the process
* Applicants informed in time regarding the status of their application especially in cases of refusal
* Parental feedback

**Monitoring Procedures**

The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the BoM at the appropriate time. It will also be referred by the principal for consideration by the full staff. The principal will report to the BOM regularly regarding the process of enrolment. Where the principal refuses admission to any applicant, by the authority delegated to her by the BoM in line with this policy, any such refusal shall be communicated to the BOM at the earliest time.

**Review of Policy**

This policy will be reviewed and updated annually and may be subject to change by the Board of Management. The updated policy and applicable criteria will be available on the school’s website, [www.merlinwoods.com](http://www.merlinwoods.com).

**Ratification & Communication**

This policy was reviewed by management and staff, and ratified by the Board of Management of Merlin Woods Primary School, in November 2018. It is communicated to parents on our school website, [www.merlinwoods.com](http://www.merlinwoods.com). It is also available for viewing in the school.

**Date for future review**: November 2020

**Signed: Paula O’Connor Principal**

**Fr Martin Glynn Chairperson, BOM**