

Coralstown National School

Coralstown,

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Co. Westmeath



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### **Admissions Policy for the Acorn ASD Class.**

April 2021

#### **1.0 Introduction.**

**Coralstown N.S. is a Roman Catholic Primary school in the Parish of Kinnegad under the patronage of Dr. Thomas Deenihan, Bishop of Meath. It is a 6 teacher school including the Principal, with 4 classes from Junior Infants to Sixth and a new Special ASD Class will commence in September 2021. The school is of mixed sex.**

The policy was approved by the school patron on 21/6/21. It is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy, on request, to any person who requests it.

The school depends on grants and resources provided by the Dept. of Education and Science and therefore cooperate with regulations laid down by the Department. The school follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the Dept. of Education and Science which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with sections 9 and 30 of the Education Act 1998. The school supports the principles of:

- (a) Inclusiveness, this includes children with a disability or other special educational needs.
- (b) Equality of access and participation in the school.
- (c) Parental choice in relation to enrolment.
- (d) Respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life within society.

The school opens at 8.50 am and closes at 2.30 pm. There is a small break from 11.00 am to 11.10 am. The children go out to the yard at 12.30 pm for lunch break and return to class at 1.00 pm. Infant classes finish at 1.30 pm and the remaining classes 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> finish at 2.30 pm.

## **1. Admission Statement**

Coralstown NS 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, 'civil status ground', 'disability ground', 'discriminate', 'family status ground', 'gender ground', 'ground of race', 'religion ground', 'sexual orientation ground' and 'Traveller community ground' shall be construed in accordance with section 3 of the Equal Status Act 2000.

Coralstown N.S. 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 student a person who is not Catholic and it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

Coralstown N.S. is a mainstream school which has established a special class, with the approval of the Minister of Education and Skills, which provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories of special educational needs, specified by the Minister and may refuse to admit to a class a student who does not have the category of needs specified.

Coralstown N.S., with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, has established a class to provide an education exclusively for students with A.S.D. who have a diagnosis and a specific recommendation.

Coralstown N.S. Special ASD Class (to be called the Acorn Class) has a maximum capacity of six pupils in one class. In setting up the class, the BoM is committed to developing an educational setting which is focused on the needs of the pupils and enables learning to take place in a safe environment, in which pupils with ASD learn a range of skills that will facilitate their making a gradual transition into mainstream classes with their own age cohort.



Parental involvement in the pupils' learning is encouraged and valued. It ensures consistency between the pupils' various learning environments.

The teaching methodologies employed in the class will be those that are deemed most appropriate to the individual pupil's learning needs. This will accord with the eclectic approach recommended by the Department of Education.

## **2.0 Enrolment/Admission Policy**

This Admission Policy complies with the requirements of the Education Act 1998, the Education (Admission to Schools) 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 SENO and the school patron. This policy will be reviewed next year and it is the intention of the Board to consult with parents of children attending the school.

Coralstown N.S. is a school which has established a class, with the approval of the Minister of Education and Skills, which provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories of special educational needs, ASD, specified by the Minister and may refuse to admit to a class a student who does not have the category of needs specified.

The maximum class size for the Acorn ASD class is 6 pupils, in line with DES policies. It will be staffed by one teacher and a minimum of 2 SNA's, as dictated by DES Allocation procedures. The Board will assess each application under the following criteria.

### **Criteria for Enrolment Eligibility:**

- In order to qualify for consideration for a place in the Acorn ASD Class, the school must be furnished with a recent psychological report outlining a primary diagnosis of Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) made using DSM-IV or ICD 10 guidelines.
- There must also be a recommendation from a psychologist that a placement in a Special ASD Class in a mainstream school is required and appropriate for the child. Such a recommendation cannot be dated more than two years prior to the proposed admission date. The recommendation for a very young child should ideally be within the last year.
- An applicant will not be enrolled in the class unless s/he is four years of age on or before the 1st September of the academic year for which the application is made.
- No student can be older than thirteen years of age during his/her last year in the class.
- A fully completed, signed and dated application form for enrolment has been submitted to the school by the parents and a vacancy exists in the class.
- If the application form is not fully completed, and/or all the required reports have not been furnished, the application will be deemed incomplete. The parents will be notified that the application will not be considered, nor a waiting list number allocated, until a complete application is submitted.

- When a complete application is submitted, the date is noted on the application form and an acknowledgement is sent indicating that the application has been allocated to a waiting list based on the criteria listed below.
- Once the psychological report has been forwarded on to the school Principal and he/she is satisfied that all the criteria have been met, parents will be invited to make an application to enrol their child in the school. The parents and the applicant are invited to a meeting with the ASD class coordinator and are encouraged to bring reports from the applicant's present educational setting to this meeting.
- The application will be assessed by the ASD Enrolment Advisory board within the timeframes outlined in the schools admission notice.
- An Enrolment form must be completed and returned with the box for Acorn ASD Class ticked, along with a copy of the child's birth certificate and a completed Pupil Online Database form. This must be done during the school's Enrolment period, generally January or February of each year. This year for the purposes of the initial start-up of the class the enrolment period is May 2021.
- Once the Board decides to offer a place in the Acorn ASD Class, a letter of offer will issue with an acceptance document, which must be completed and returned within the specified time scale. If the offer is not accepted or the completed acceptance document is not returned, the Board will then offer the place to the next person on the waiting list, if one exists.
- The waiting list will be maintained for the duration of the academic year only, for which the application was initially made.

Priority is given to valid enrolment applications for children in the Parish of Kinnegad, with children from outside the Parish being considered as recommended/advised by the SENO for the school.

In the event that the number of valid applications exceeds the number of places available, a waiting list will be drawn up.

In the event that the class 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. We will endeavour to provide an age appropriate setting for our pupils and as this is a start-up class we are giving priority to children of a similar age cohort.

- a) siblings of currently enrolled pupils [siblings to include step siblings, half siblings and fostered children residing at the same address ;
- b) those permanently resident within the Catholic parish of Kinnegad and the traditional catchment area of the school.
- c) all remaining applicants. If, in this category, there is oversubscription the criteria will be determined by distance from the school with those closest to school, as determined by their Eircode, being given priority.



***The maximum class size in the Acorn ASD class is not to exceed 6 pupils.***

Enrolment in the Acorn ASD Class does not entitle the child to a place in a class in the mainstream school. Fulfilling the enrolment criteria as laid out above does not guarantee enrolment if sufficient places are not available and/or sufficient classroom space is not available.

The parents/guardians of the child must accept and agree to the school's Code of Behaviour and the terms of the school's Admission Policy.

#### **ASD Class Enrolment Advisory Board**

- The Advisory Board consists of the school Principal, management staff and the teacher from the class. The decision as to the placement of an applicant in the class lies with the Board of Management.
- Places are allocated in the class on condition that the appropriate resources are provided and continue to be provided, by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and the DE.
- **The decision as to the placement of an applicant in the Acorn Class lies with the Board of Management.**

**Placement in the Acorn ASD Class is subject to annual review.**

Placement and Continuing Placement of a Pupil in the class

- The individual needs of each pupil are constantly reviewed to ensure that the class is the appropriate setting to meet the pupil's needs. A review of each pupil's process and his/her Individual Education Profile will be carried out in consultation with Parents and other professionals where necessary.
- The school reserves the right to review the pupil's progress at the end of each academic year to determine whether the unit continues to be an appropriate placement for him/her.
- If the school cannot meet the required needs of the child, the child will not be re-enrolled in the class for the following year and the following actions will take place:
  1. The school will notify, in writing, the parents/guardians of the rationale of the decision.
  2. The school will notify, in writing, the SENO (NCSE) of the decision and the requirements necessary for the school to meet the specified needs of the child.

#### **Inclusion from the ASD class into Mainstream**

Arrangements for pupil's integration into the mainstream will be made according to their level of need and attainments. School personnel will decide when inclusion/integration into a mainstream setting is appropriate. This may be at an age range above or below the pupil's age, but will be at the class that is best suited to meet the pupil's needs and the one that is chronologically most appropriate.

Equality of access is the key value that determines the enrolment of children to our school. No child will be refused admission for reasons of ethnicity, special educational needs, disability, language/accent, gender, traveller status, asylum-seeker/refugee status, religious or political beliefs & values, family or social circumstances.

### **3 Categories of Special Educational Needs catered for in the school/special class**

Coralstown N.S Special ASD Class (to be called the Acorn Class) has a maximum capacity of six pupils in one class. In setting up the class, the BoM is committed to developing an educational setting which is focused on the needs of the pupils and enables learning to take place in a safe environment, in which pupils with ASD learn a range of skills that will facilitate their making a gradual transition into mainstream classes with their own age cohort.

While recognising the right of parents to enrol their child in the school of their choice, the Board of Management of Coralstown N.S. is also responsible to respect the rights of the existing school community and in particular, the children already enrolled. This requires balanced judgements, which are guided by the principles of natural justice and acting in the best interest of all children. Assisting the school in such circumstances, the Board of Management, with due regard for the Patron's wishes, reserves the right to determine the maximum number of children in each separate classroom bearing in mind:

- Size of /available space in classrooms.
- Availability of grants and teacher resources provided by the Department of Education and Science.
- Educational needs of children of a particular age.
- Multi-grade classes.
- Presence of children with special educational/ behavioural needs.
- Department of Education and Science maximum class average directives.

Children with special needs will be resourced in accordance with the level of resources provided by the Department of Education and Science to the Board of Management. Educational resources and facilities as outlined by a professional and/or medical report should be put in place prior to the child's first day in the school. Notwithstanding the availability of such resources, parents of children who are unsatisfied with the level of educational provision in our school, are advised to consider a special school which is designed and resourced to specifically cater for the needs of children with specific learning/behavioural difficulties.

Children enrolled in our school are required to co-operate with and support the School/ Board of Management's Code of Behaviour as well as all other policies on curriculum, organisation, & management. The Board of Management places Parents/ Guardians as responsible for ensuring that their child(ren) co-operate with said policies in an age-appropriate way. In accordance with the Department of Education and Science's rules for National Schools, a child may be suspended and in exceptional circumstances expelled.

These policies may be added to and revised from time-to-time.



#### 4.0 Parental Involvement

As a Catholic school, we believe that the school is not an isolated unit but a union of many people who come together to give it its life and meaning. The triple partnership of home, school and parish is essential if the school is to live up to its Mission Statement. We aim to establish this relationship through:

- encouraging a shared commitment to the success of each individual child;
- encouraging an ethos of understanding and openness in home-school-parish relationships;
- Helping parents to develop a positive role in complementing and supporting the work of the school in educating their children.

Parental involvement in the life of the school is encouraged in many ways:

- through parent/partnership groups working in school under the auspices of Coralstown N.S. Parents Association;
- fund raising parent helpers;
- involvement in assemblies, celebrations, concerts and school Masses;
- involvement in sacramental preparation;
- school activities, sports, etc. days.

We are committed to methods of evaluating and improving channels of communication between school and parents. Our evaluation shall be ongoing and continuous, as we make every effort to make parents feel welcome and valued at all times.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 21/6/21

Meath Diocesan Education Office

**Approved**

Signed: *Paul Finnell*

Date: *21/6/2021*

