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Early Intervention ASD Pre-School Enrolment Policy

We in St. Mary's P.S. want to give the highest quality of pre-school education to our children. We want the individual to grow to his/her full potential. Our aim is that this education will prepare each child for continued and appropriate schooling to the best of his/her ability. We recognise and value the role of parents as the primary educator of their children; together we can provide the skills for a loving approach to learning. We take an eclectic approach to teaching our pupils. We don't subscribe exclusively to any one approach to the education of children with Autism. However, we employ an ethos that is based upon the TEACCH method. Our pre-school is managed by the Board of Management of St. Mary's P.S. however our pre-school and St. Mary's P.S. are considered separate entities for the purpose of enrolment/admission.

Aim of Our Early Intervention ASD Pre-school

The aim of the pre-school is to provide a caring learning environment which facilitates the nurturing of each pupil's full educational potential. The achievement of this aim informs all of the planning processes and activities which occur in our school. The Principal, teachers, support staff and parents are partners in their children's education with co-operation and communication between home and school being vital ingredients in the educational process. We share the same purpose - the care and wellbeing of the children in our care. Each child's placement in the pre-school may be reviewed after one year following input from the multi-disciplinary team. Our pre-school endorses the principle that a child be in a setting appropriate to their needs.

Mission Statement

Established in 2021 under the auspices of the NCSE and following consultation with our Special Educational Needs Organiser our pre-school offers specialist educational service to children who have been fully diagnosed with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (a diagnosis of Autism as per D.S.M.IV & V or I.C.D.10/11).

We aim to create a supportive and caring environment for each pupil.

With a team of dedicated teachers and special needs assistants, the school provides individual attention in small classes catering for the uniqueness of each pupil's personality.

Families of students are encouraged to participate in the development of their child's learning. The aim is to provide quality preschool education to the children so they are enabled to attain their educational potential when they leave our pre-school.

Admission to the Early Intervention ASD Pre-school

The Board of Management of St. Mary's P.S. has set out this policy in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000, and Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004.

The pre-school was established in 2021, funded and resourced by the Department of Education and Science. This school policy has regard to the funding, resources, services and space available.

The Board of Management reserves the right of admission within the terms of this policy.

The Board of Management will not, however, refuse a child based on:

1. Ethnicity
2. Disability (Severity of Diagnosis)
3. Traveller status
4. Political beliefs
5. Family or social circumstances.

Criteria for enrolment/ admission

The 'Réaltaí Beaga' classes attached to St. Mary's Primary provide an education exclusively for students with Autism and the school may refuse admission to these classes, where the student concerned does not meet the criteria below.

Children and young people are eligible for enrolment in 'Réaltaí Beaga' classes when the following is provided in support of such an application:

Professional report(s) outlining:

- **Diagnosis of special educational needs for 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 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 autism**

AND

- **The child must be between the age of three and five years upon admission. A child who turns six on/after September 1st should not be in a preschool setting as per Department of Education guidelines and therefore will not be considered for enrolment/admission in our pre-school.**

A child may normally be enrolled in the Pre-school for either one or two academic school year(s). The option of a third year in the pre-school / 'Réaltaí Beaga' is possible once the child is age appropriate. Following this period they should advance to a placement in a

mainstream class, in special class or in special school in the September prior to their sixth birthday.

We consider the pre-school to be a feeder school to ASD classes attached to mainstream schools or children's local mainstream school where appropriate.

Enrolment/ Admission to our pre-school does not ensure automatic admission to St. Mary's P.S. mainstream school.

Whilst both the pre-school and St. Mary's P.S. are run by the Board of Management of St. Mary's P.S. they have separate enrolment/ admissions procedures and criteria.

Enrolment Procedure

The process of enrolment begins with

1. A completed application form submitted to the school by parent(s)/guardian(s). All applications must be accompanied by an up-to-date educational psychological assessment and diagnostic report which confirms diagnosis of ASD in line with current Department of Education criteria (a diagnosis of Autism as per D.S.M.IV & V or I.C.D.10/11).
3. Fully completed applications are then recorded in the applications file.
4. Entry into this file secures a place on the list of pre-admissions applicants.
5. Each fully completed application will be dated and placed in the Early Intervention Pre-school admissions file.
6. All applications are reviewed after the closing date as per the school's annual admissions notice and places are offered as per criteria outlined below. Relevant NCSE forms are then submitted to the SENO for approval. All offers are subject to confirmation by the SENO on submission of NCSE forms.

Please note the following:

- The relevant dates and timelines for St. Mary's P.S. Edenderry admissions process are set out in the school's annual admissions notice which is published annually and the school's website at least one week before the commencement of the admissions process for the school year concerned. Any applications received after that date will only be considered if places are available.
- All the above information will be forwarded to the Special Educational Needs Organiser as part of the admissions process.

Should there be excess demand for places the Board of Management will follow the following criteria:

1. **The oldest child as per date of birth on the child's Birth Certificate.***
2. **Children who have a sibling currently attending the school.**
3. **Children of parents who are past pupils of the school. (Up to 25% of the numbers in the school admissions notice).**

4. **Children who live in closest proximity to the school in kilometres as per Google Maps (as identified by the shortest driving route between the two identified locations as per Google Maps and building Eircodes).**

***Where two children have the same date of birth, priority will be given to the child with the earliest time of birth on the date as per the child's Birth Certificate.**

A waiting list will be compiled of applicants whose applications to Réaltaí Beaga classes were unsuccessful due to oversubscription. This waiting list will remain valid for the duration of the school year for which admission is being sought.

Placement on the waiting list of Saint Mary's 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. Applicants whose applications are received after the closing date outlined in the Annual Admission Notice, and who satisfy the criteria as outlined in our Early Intervention ASD Pre-School Enrolment Policy, will be placed at the end of the waiting list in order of the date of receipt of the application.

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.

Late applicants will be notified of the decision in respect of their application no later than three weeks after the date on which the school received the application. Late applicants will be offered a place if there is place available. In the event that there is no place available, the name of the applicant will be added to the waiting list.

Role of the SENO

The Special Educational Needs Organiser has a very important role within the operation of the pre-school. She/He can act as liaison person between the HSE and the pre-school. She/he may attend to provide advice, clarity in relation to NCSE guidelines or background information pertinent to each case.

All applications for supports for children attending the pre-school will be processed by the SENO in line with Department of Education & Skills and NCSE guidelines.

Please note that the fulfilling of the enrolment criteria does not necessarily ensure enrolment if:

1. Necessary resources pertaining to the enrolment are not available
2. Sufficient preschool places are not available.

The Board of Management of St. Mary's P.S. respects the rights of the existing school community and the children already enrolled. This consideration is paramount when assessing entry to the pre-school.

All admissions/ enrolments for September of any academic school year should be completed as per date on admissions notice as published on website *stmaryspsedenderry.ie* and or relevant NCSE deadlines. Parents of successful applicants will be contacted by phone and

post and must return a form accepting a place in the pre-school. This must take place within the deadlines outlined in the school's admissions notice.

An offer of admission may not be made or may be withdrawn by Saint Mary's 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.

Deferral of enrolment is not currently facilitated. Should parents decide not to accept a place in the pre-school that place will be offered to another child.

A pupil teacher ratio of no greater than six to one will be strictly adhered to in the pre-school.

Discharge of Pupils from the Pre-school

The number of places available in the pre-school will be ascertained based on the number of pupils eligible and wanting to do a further year in the pre-school. A review of all children attending the preschool will take place and will result in one of the following:

- Onward progression to an ASD class attached to a mainstream primary school.
- Onward progression to the child's local mainstream primary school.
- Retention in the pre-school for a further academic school year. This will not be possible if the child is turning 6 years on/before September 1st of the coming school year i.e. a child should not turn six in preschool.

This policy is subject to ongoing review.

Policy Ratified by the Board of Management of St. Mary's P.S. on 20/09/2025.

Policy Ratified by the patron, Bishop Denis Nulty on 25/09/2025.

Signed: Oliver Hickey

Date: 26-9-2025

Oliver Hickey

Chairperson Board of Management of St. Mary's P.S.