**Enrolment / Dismissal Policy and General Guidelines – St. Colman’s National School Autism Unit-Lann Eala**

**History**

The Autism Unit in St. Colman’s National School-Lann Eala was established in September, 2014. The unit caters for two classes of six children with A.S.D.

 St. Colman’s National School is a Catholic Primary School under the patronage of the Bishop of Meath. The school is committed to the holistic development of the full potential of each student particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised.

**About our School**

We in the Autism Unit, Lann Eala- St.Colman’s National School aspire towards providing the highest quality of education for our children. We want each individual to grow to his/her full potential. Our aim is that our education provision will prepare each child for life to the best of his/her ability. We recognise and value the role of parents as the primary educators 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 in relation to the education of children with Autism. However, we employ an ethos that is based upon the TEACCH method and use an eclectic approach in many instances

We offer an eclectic model of autism-specific approaches, including some or all of the following:-

·         TEACCH (a visually structured teaching approach)

·         ABA (a behavioural approach)

·         Sensory Integration (exercises to aid sensory processing)

·         PECS (a communication system using picture exchange)

·         Lámh ( an augmentative communication system using simple sign language)

·         Intensive Interaction

·         Floortime (spontaneous play when we ‘follow the child’s lead’ connecting and aiding development)

After a period of time observing, interacting with and assessing the child, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be drawn up in consultation with the parents and relevant professionals. This will highlight priority learning needs and will be reviewed termly.

**Aim of Lann Eala Autism Unit**

The aim of the unit is to provide a caring learning environment which facilitates the nurturing of each pupil’s full educational potential. The pursuit 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 well-being of all the children in our care. Lann Eala- St. Colman’s National Schools Autism Unit is a referral school. For this reason great emphasis is placed on the areas of communication, daily living skills, socialisation and literacy. Demand for places far exceeds capacity, hence the need for a robust enrolment policy. Each child’s placement in the unit is reviewed after a two year period on foot of a psychological assessment from NEPS and input from the multi – disciplinary team.

**Mission Statement**

Established in 2014, opened in September 2014 under the auspices of the Department of Education and Skills, Lann Eala Autism Unit offers a specialised educational service to children who have been diagnosed with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as the primary disability. The unit strives 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 condition, personality and needs. At all times parents of students are encouraged to participate in the development of their child’s learning. The aim is to enable the children to attain their educational potential and to fulfil their role in society.

**Our Mission:** Real Education for Real Life**.**

**Routines and General Information**

1. The school day for the Special Autism Classes runs from 9.20 to 2.00pm for those children with less than two full years completed at primary school or who have not yet reached their 7th birthday. After this the school day runs from 9.20 to 3.00pm. These times are governed by the Department of Education and Skills Rules for National Schools having been agreed with the Department’s Inspectorate and the N.C.S.E.

2. Children are not allowed to enter the Classes unless accompanied by a Special Needs Assistant who are available to meet the children upon arrival.

3. There is a 10 minute break at 11.00 and lunch is at 1:00pm.(unless the class teacher changes the time to suit the needs of the pupils in her/his class) Children in the Unit who avail of a ‘buddy’ at break time may take their lunch at 10.50am and 12.50 pm

4. The children are dispersed at either 2.00pm or 3.00pm depending on (1) above. The children are expected to leave the school under the direction of the unit’s staff. They are met at the front door by their parents or by bus escort. Children availing of state transport board these vehicles in the school car park with the help of Special Needs Assistants.

5. A list of class activities (e.g. swimming, library trips) is sent to parents by the class teachers at regular intervals throughout the school year if applicable. Initially swimming will be considered for Lann Eala. A list of school holidays and closures is also sent to all parents by means of letter, phone or text message.

6. As per mainstream school, parents are expected to contribute towards the cost of school books, stationery and extra- curricular activities as they arise.

**School Attendance**

Each child to whom the Education Welfare Act applies is obliged by law to attend school every day on which the school is in operation, unless there is a reasonable excuse for not attending. The school authorities are obliged to notify the National Education Welfare Board when a child is absent for more than 20 days or if a reasonable excuse has not been provided for an absence by the child’s parents.

**Absences**

Parents/ Guardians are asked to ring the school if their child is absent. This should be followed by a separate note confirming same, or by a note written in the child’s home/school diary. If a child needs to leave early, a written note must be sent to the teacher or the school informed by phone.

**Communication with School**

Parents are always welcome to visit the school to discuss their child’s progress. It is impossible however for teachers or other staff members to talk to parents if they arrive unexpectedly. **Please ring the school secretary and make an appointment to see the teacher/ principal.** Parent / Teacher meetings are held in the second half of November.

Constant communication and monitoring of progress is achieved through the school/home diary. The diary remains the property of the school at all times. The home school diary contains a brief note about each activity during the day and is updated by all the staff in the unit. It is regularly reviewed by the class teacher.( On days when the child goes to Respite, the diary will not be sent with their homework folder so as to ensure confidentiality.)

Sometimes children in the unit are recorded on video and audio during the year. By signing up to this policy, parents are confirming their willingness to allow their children engage in these activities. In exceptional circumstances a dedicated permission slip will be issued to parents e.g. in the event of T.V. exposure

 **Information we need**

In order for us to be entrusted with the care of your child we require the following information.

1. Emergency contact numbers 2. Allergies? 3. Medical needs 4. Hygiene needs 5. Family members 6. Extended family and friends.

Changes in family circumstances, e.g the arrival of a new baby, moving home, the death of a grand – parent, etc. can have an effect on your child. You may wish to notify the class teacher of any such events.

**Dress/Clothing/Belongings**

A large part of our school programme is dedicated towards developing your child’s independence. We want them to be able to manage and look after their own clothing and belongings.

You can help us by:

1. Choosing clothes and shoes that make life easier for your child. (Buttons, zips and laces sometimes cause problems. Velcro runners and elastic waistbands are simplest.) 2. Ensuring your child has a track suit for P.E & Swimming. 3. Ensuring togs, hat and towel are available for swimming. 4. Ensuring your child’s name is on everything that is worn to school. 5. Ensuring that a change of clothes is available in the school for your child. 6. Ensuring that all money sent to school should be in an envelope and clearly labelled.

**Personal Care**

Everybody works best when they feel clean and comfortable. Hygiene is a whole school issue. With this in mind we encourage parents to –

1. Keep children’s nails short. 2. Check hair regularly for lice. 3. Send in a change of clothes / nappies / sanitary towels if necessary.

  **Illness**

Every child’s health is important to us. In order to ensure the highest standard of medical care, the following procedures have been agreed –

1. Home is the best place for a sick child. 2. Wounds should be properly dressed. 3. Please notify us of any medication that your child may be taking. 4. As a rule, teachers are unable to administer medication. Please contact the Principal for arrangements. (See Administration of Medicines Policy) 5. Never send medication to school with your child.

**Children with Specific Toileting/Intimate Care Needs:**

1. In all situations where a pupil needs assistance with toileting/intimate care, a meeting will be convened, after enrolment and before the child starts school
2. Parents, Guardians, Principal, Class Teacher, SNA, and if appropriate, the pupil, will attend
3. The specific care needs of the child, and how the school will meet them, will be clarified
4. Personnel involved in this care will be identified
5. Two members of staff will be present (where possible) when dealing with intimate care needs
6. Any changes in routine will be discussed with parent/guardian and pupil and noted in writing to the pupil’s file
7. As far as possible the pupil will be involved in identification of his/her personal requirements, wishes, changes etc
8. A written copy of the agreement will be kept on the pupils file
9. Parents will be notified of any changes from agreed procedures
10. At all times the dignity and privacy of the pupil will be paramount in addressing intimate care needs
11. Staff will wear protective gloves

**Suitable snacks for school**

While respecting the dietary difficulties faced by many of our children, we encourage healthy, balanced diets. Suitable snacks include fruits, yoghurts, crackers, cheese, and sandwiches. Please inform the school if your child has a special dietary requirement or any food allergies. Please ask for a copy of the schools Healthy Eating Policy on enrolment.

**Homework**

Children are expected to do a reasonable amount of (if applicable) homework every night except on Fridays. This homework should be signed either at home (or by the carers at Respite if applicable). In most circumstances this will involve giving some time to hear reading, checking spellings and handwriting and helping with drawing or sums (depending on age and ability of the individual).

 **Information and Communication Technology**

All the children have access to computers in the Autism Unit or mainstream classroom. The staff will also consider the need for assistive technology if it arises and if resources allow. Applications for assistive technology are dealt with by the area Special Education Needs Organiser.

**Special Olympics Ireland**

A new Special Olympics Club has been set up in Offaly LannEala is not affiliated yet but we hope to in the future.

**Break time procedures**

A buddy system with the mainstream classes is sometimes used by the school to assist in the integration of special needs pupils at break times. The Principal and staff are vigilant at all times in the play area and a supervision system is in place.

**Health Service Executive Input**

Essential services are provided by the Health Service Executive. These services include Speech and Language therapy and Occupational therapy. National School has no control over these services, merely acting as the relevant setting for their provision. All queries about these services must be addressed to the Health Service Executive and not Lann Eala, St. Colman’s National School.

**July Programme**

All children in the Lann Eala Autism Unit can avail of a special July Programme under the auspices of the Department of Education and Skills. Parents are invited to allow their children participate in this programme which commences immediately after the school year concludes. Activities commence at 9.20am and conclude at 3.00pm, and generally consist of play activities, class work, life skills and social / educational outings. Participation in this programme is not mandatory and the same level of care and attention is provided as during the normal school year.

**Enrolment /Admissions Policy**

The Board of Management of St. Colman’s National School has set out this policy in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status ACT 2000, and the Education for Persons with Special Needs [EPSEN] Act 2004 which has yet to be fully implemented.

This school policy has regard to the funding, resources, services and space available at any given time.

**Enrolment**

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 on the basis of

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

All the children must reside in the Midland Health Service Executive Area and fulfil the enrolment criteria. All children seeking enrolment must have a definitive diagnosis of Autism as per psychological report.,

**Enrolment procedure**

The process of enrolment begins with

1. A referral from the Autism team or a telephone call or visit in person from the parents.

2. A school Application-Pre Enrolment Form, showing family details and medical history is then completed. This application must be accompanied by an up to date educational psychological assessment and diagnostic report from the relevant professional which confirms diagnoses of ASD in line with current DES criteria 3. Fully completed applications are then recorded in the applications file.

   This form should be accompanied by an original birth certificate 4. All the above information will be forwarded to the SENO as part of the admissions process.

**Criteria for enrolment**

Under guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills the maximum class size is six pupils. LannEala Autism Unit will only consider children for enrolment if they have a definite diagnosis of Autism and have a written professional recommendation for a place in an Autism Unit in a mainstream setting. If the number of children on the list of applicants exceeds the number of places available the following criteria will apply.

1. Priority will be given to a child already enrolled in St. Colman’s N.S. identified with a diagnosis of ASD and a recommendation for a place in the ASD unit by a clinical psychologist.

\*If the class is oversubscribed see below

 2. Priority will be given to a child who has sisters / brothers / stepsiblings of children already in the school.

\* If the class is oversubscribed see below

3. Children whose primary residence is in the immediate Mucklagh area, starting with those nearest the school and radiating outwards to a distance of 4 kilometres.

\* If the class is oversubscribed see below

 4. Children who would have to pass LannEala, (St. Colman’s school) to secure a placement in an alternative ASD setting, i.e. children whose primary residence is in , Rahan, Tullamore, Kilcormac, Mount Bolus, Blueball, Killeigh, Coolinarney areas within 12 kilometres of St. Colman’s N.S. and who do not already have a special class placement elsewhere.

\* If the class is oversubscribed see below

 5. If places are still available they will be allocated from our pre enrolment file on the basis of chronological age.

\* If the class is oversubscribed see below

 6. Allocation of a place in the Autism Unit does not guarantee a place in mainstream classes for any siblings.(See Enrolment Policy for St. Colman's N.S., Mucklagh, Mainstream)

\*If there are more children than places available in LannEala- places will be allocated on the basis of greater need as determined by the Multidisciplinary team. Should needs of pupils in question be determined to be equal; priority will be given to the child whose primary residence is in the Mucklagh/Rahan parish or whichever is nearer.

**Note** – All decisions to offer places will involve consultation with the SENO Aisling Bacon and some or all of the following Clinical Psychologist, NEPS Psychologist, Principal, Class Teachers Possibly- Occupational Therapist

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 classroom space is not available. 3. If a child is granted a place in the unit for a particular school year and the parents do not accept the placement, the child’s name is removed from the list of applicants for that particular year. A new Application must be made to reinstate the child on the list of applicants for placement in subsequent years.

The Board of management of St. Colman’s National School respects the rights of the existing school community and the children already enrolled. This consideration is paramount when assessing entry to the Autism Unit.

**Discharge Policy**

**Rationale:** The policy was formulated so that;1. Teaching staff have well defined guidelines on best practice. 2. Parents are fully aware of these practices. 3. There is consistency throughout the school. 4. Optimum learning experiences are provided for all children

**Aims:**

1. To provide a teaching and learning experience that enables pupils with Special Educational Needs to become exposed to learning in a mainstream setting and special class setting.2. To enable the children in the mainstream classes to interact with children with special needs, encouraging understanding, tolerance

3. To develop the social skills and self-esteem of the children in the Autism Unit to enable them transfer seamlessly to an appropriate second level setting

**Criteria:**

1. It is school policy to facilitate the discharge of the pupils from the unit once they have reached the age of 12. 2. Pupils who reach the age of 12 after September 30th may complete that particular academic year in the school resulting in a June discharge. 3. Pupils in (2) above may avail of the July Programme in the year of discharge. 4. Pupils who are fully integrated into mainstream by the time they reach senior cycle are discharged with their class groups in 6th 5. Discharge from the unit may also occur if the school authorities and relevant professionals, in consultation with parents / guardians, feel that the child’s placement is not appropriate.

**Policy on the Integration and Inclusion of pupils from the Autism Unit into Mainstream**

**Classes.**

The need for a policy on inclusion developed from the collective desire of the teaching staff to have a defined and uniform whole school approach to the issue of integration. The policy was devised following consultation with all stake holders including the principal, mainstream and special class teachers, the National Educational Psychological Service, The National Council for Special Education and the inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science.

Section 2 of the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004 (Epsen Act) states; “A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with- (a) the best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any (b) the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated”

 The school promotes a policy of integration with age appropriate peers on a social level and ability appropriate on a curriculum level. It may not always be possible to integrate children in their age equivalent class due to the age profile of the children in the unit. It is however, envisaged that the children will make their Holy Communion and Confirmation with their age appropriate peers. The children will, as stated in our discharge policy, leave our school to prepare for an appropriate Secondary School placement on the June after their 12th birthday or having completed an 8 year Primary school cycle.

The level of integration/ reverse integration that each child receives in St. Colman’s National School is collectively decided upon by those professionals who deal with the child each day i.e. teachers (both special education teachers and mainstream), the principal and support staff. The views of other interested parties such as Psychologists, Speech Therapists and Occupational therapists will be taken into account when making these decisions. Parents will be consulted on an ongoing basis and their feedback will play an integral part in deciding upon the appropriate level of integration. The Board of Management ultimately rubber stamps decisions on appropriate levels of integration.

**Staff Roles:**

**Principal:**

With reference to the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004, the role of the principal entails; 1. Direct responsibility for co-ordinating an effective whole school approach to integration. This may be delegated to the Deputy Principal or a post holder depending on circumstances. 2. Responsibility for the provision of in-service training and adequate resourcing. 3. Monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and making relevant adjustments following consultation. 4. Working with parents and out of school agencies. 5. Establishing a robust self-evaluation procedure.

**Special Class Teachers:**

1. Will identify the appropriate curriculum strands the child in the Autism Unit should experience. 2. Ensure S.N.A support is available during any period of integration. 3. Collaborate and consult with mainstream teachers in setting specific, measurable, achievable, relevant short term and long term targets. 4. Assume responsibility for an ongoing IEP in consultation with the relevant support services, parents and the principal. At present each Special Class produces an IEP in the first term. This is updated in the second term and final term. The professional opinion of the teacher dictates if the IEP needs to be updated more frequently. This decision is taken in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

**Class Teachers:**

1. Will differentiate teaching programmes to meet the needs of the child from the Autism Unit. 2. Provide a suitable seating arrangement in a mainstream setting. 3. Collaborate with the special class teacher and the S.N.A. 4. Provide feedback on progress. 5. Contribute to the IEP.

**Special Needs Assistants/ Care Assistants**

Each class is allocated 2 SNA’s by the area SENO. Generally, the S.N.A’S are allocated to the school and employed by the Department of Education. They are not assigned to any one child and there is great scope in their job specification to move between classes when needs arise. Their main role is to assist the class teacher with the specific goals and targets set down in the child’s IEP and provide for the care needs of the child in an inclusive setting where access to the curriculum is prioritised.

**Implementation:**

The school promotes a policy of integration with age appropriate peers on a social level and ability appropriate on a curriculum level.

The policy is open to review at all times. Early levels of integration into mainstream are on a social level only. The child from the Autism Unit will not partake in general class learning until they have mastered the art of – 1. Entering the class without trepidation. 2. Sitting down at a designated desk 3. Interacting on a social level with the child (ren) nearest them. 4.. Acting on general teacher instructions within the classroom setting with SNA support.

**Curricular Integration**

Having adjusted on a social level, the child from the Autism Unit will, on a phased basis, be introduced to areas of the curriculum appropriate to ability level. Art and Craft classes at Junior and Senior Infant level will be targeted initially(depending on the child’s needs.) Integration into this class will continue up through the classes.

 Music has also been designated an area open to integration. This extends to school choirs (communion), carol singing groups, school plays and recitals.

Religion and SPHE are also targeted for integration.

Physical Education is also an area where integration is encouraged. The child is integrated into the class that best suits his/her physical condition. This includes games coaching from outside groups such as the GAA and timetabled sessions in the school gym.

The children for the Autism Unit are also included in the school sports day and drama and faith formation ceremonies where appropriate.

**Reverse Integration**

A policy of reverse integration extends to all classes. This involves:

1. The child from the Autism unit being integrated for core curriculum subjects such as Maths and English initially through reverse integration whereby 1-4 children from the mainstream class are withdrawn to join the special needs children in their own environment. It is hoped that this will in the long term lead to ease of integration into the mainstream class.

**The level of integration into a mainstream class for a core curriculum subject will be on an individual basis only and will differ from child to child. The school will retain discretion as to the particular children who should avail of core curriculum mainstream integration**  2. A timetabled buddy system involving the children from Lann Eala, (Autism Unit)and children from the mainstream may be operational during playtimes throughout the year(where appropriate and beneficial) until such time as the special needs children are comfortable in their surroundings and can **engage in independent play under the supervision of an SNA.**

**Staff Development:**

Opportunities for inservice will sought during the school year from appropriate and qualified practitioners or by personnel from the Special Education Support Service (SESS)

**Evaluation**

The Board of Management will continue to monitor the implementation of all aspects of this policy which was reviewed and amended as appropriate in the school year 2015/16, again in 2018/2019.

 I ------------------------------------- agree to the terms and conditions of enrolment to

Lann Eala, St. Colman’s National School Autism Unit and accept the school policies already in

place for all school routines. A Copy of these policies are available on request.

Signed:

 ---------------------------------------------- Parent(s)/ Guardian(s)

----------------------------------------------- Kay Joyce -School Principal

---------------------------------------------- Class Teacher.

--------------------------------------------- Fr.Martin Carley -Chairperson

Ratified on: 26th June 2014

Revised on 21st September 2019

**Enrolment Criteria for LannEala**

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| --- | --- |
| **Priority** | **Criterion** |
| 1. | . Priority will be given to a child already enrolled in St. Colman’s N.S. identified with a diagnosis of ASD and a recommendation for a place in the ASD unit by a clinical psychologist. \*If the class is oversubscribed see below  |
| 2. | Priority will be given to a child who has sisters / brothers / stepsiblings of children already in the school.\* If the class is oversubscribed see below   |
| 3. | . Children whose primary residence is in the immediate Mucklagh area, starting with those nearest the school and radiating outwards to a distance of 4 kilometres. \* If the class is oversubscribed see below   |
| 4. | 4. Children who would have to pass LannEala, (St. Colman’s school) to secure a placement in an alternative ASD setting, i.e. children whose primary residence is in , Rahan, Tullamore, Kilcormac, Mount Bolus, Blueball, Killeigh, Coolinarney areas within 12 kilometres of St. Colman’s N.S. and who do not already have a special class placement elsewhere. \* If the class is oversubscribed see below  |
| 5. | 5. If places are still available they will be allocated from our pre enrolment file on the basis of chronological age\* If the class is oversubscribed see below  |
| 6. | 6. Allocation of a place in the Autism Unit does not guarantee a place in mainstream classes for any siblings. |
|  | \*If there are more children than places available in LannEala- places will be allocated on the basis of greater need as determined by the Multidisciplinary team. Should needs of pupils in question be determined to be equal; priority will be given to the child whose primary residence is in the Mucklagh/Rahan parish or whichever is nearer |

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