

# **Autism Spectrum Disorder A.S.D Policy**

## **Ballyadams N.S**

### **About our School**

We in Ballyadams N.S want to give the highest quality of 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 life 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 which promotes the encouragement of living skills. In Ballyadams N.S we do not subscribe to a singular but rather a multi - faceted approach to the education of children with Autism.

### **Aim of the class for children with Autistic.Spectrum.Disorder Ballyadams N.S**

The aim of the special classes 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, special needs assistants and parents are partners in their children's education with co-operation and communication between home and school being the chief ingredients in the educational process. We share the same purpose – the care and wellbeing of the children in our care. We place great emphasis on the areas of communication, daily living skills, socialisation, literacy and numeracy.

### **Mission Statement**

Sanctioned in September 2021 by the Department of Education and Skills & N.C.S.E we at Ballyadams N.S aim to provide a specialised educational service to children who have been fully diagnosed with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Ballyadams N.S strives to create a supportive and caring environment for each pupil in our A.S.D Class(es). 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. Our aim is to enable the children to attain their educational potential.

Our Mission: Real Education for Real Life.

### **Rationale**

The policy was formulated so that:

1. Teachers and SNAs had well defined guidelines on best practice
2. Parents were aware of these practices
3. There was consistency throughout the school
4. Optimum learning experiences were provided for all the children of the school body.

### **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. Our A.S.D Class facilitates optimum inclusion as part of the school community with access to mainstream activities as appropriate.
2. To enable the children in the mainstream classes to observe and interact with children with special needs, encouraging understanding and tolerance
3. To develop the social skills and self-esteem of the children in the class for children with A.S.D

### **Routines and General Information**

# Autism Spectrum Disorder A.S.D Policy

## Ballyadams N.S

### Time

1. The school day runs from 9.20am to 2.00pm for those children with less than two full years completed at primary school. After this, the school day runs from 9.20am to 3.00pm. These times are governed by the Department of Education and Skills Rules for National Schools and having been fully agreed upon with the Department's inspectorate.
2. Children are not allowed to enter the school building until 9.20am
3. There is a 10-minute break at 11.00am and lunch is for 30 minutes at 12.45pm
4. The children are dismissed at either 2.00pm or 3.00pm as above. The children are expected to leave the school under the direction of the A.S.D Class staff. They are to be met at a school designated location by their parents, carers, transport providers or by a pre-arranged person known to the child. As we encourage independence, the child may be supervised visually from the yard by a member of staff. If someone different is collecting the child, please advise the school in advance. This can be done in writing through the child's communication diary / contacting the school. We cannot release the child to someone different if this procedure is not followed. This is to ensure the safety of your child. Anyone signing the children out within school hours will use the 'sign-out' book in reception.
5. A list of class activities (e.g. swimming, library trips etc.) will be sent to you by the class teacher as it arises. A list of school holidays and closures will also be sent to you at the beginning of the year.
6. As per mainstream schooling, parents are expected to contribute towards the cost of school books, stationery and extra- curricular activities as they occur.

### School Attendance

Each child to whom the School Attendance 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 school attendance officer when a child is absent on a regular basis or if a reasonable excuse has not been provided for an absence by the child's parents. **If a child exceeds the maximum quota of 20 days of uncertified absences the school will report this to the Educational Welfare Officer as we are required by law to do so.**

### Absences

Parents/ Guardians are asked to contact the school if their child is absent. If a child needs to leave early a written note must be sent to the class teacher or the school informed by phone.

### Home/School Communication

We realise that it may be difficult for some to get to Ballyadams N.S. Please remember that you are always welcome. **It is impossible, however for teachers or other staff members to talk to parents if they arrive unexpectedly. Please ring or email, and make an appointment to see the teacher/Principal through the school secretary,** or via the communication diary.

Student Support Plus Plan meetings are usually held in October and February. Constant communication and monitoring of progress is achieved through the communication diary. The diary remains the *property of the school* at all times.

The home/school diary contains a brief note about the children's day and is updated by the staff in the class for children with A.S.D. On days when the child goes to respite, parents can request that the

# Autism Spectrum Disorder A.S.D Policy

## Ballyadams N.S

journal will not be sent with them, so as to protect confidentiality. **We ask you to write a note in the journal each day as we can then be sure that all communication is being received.**

### 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 and procedures
2. Likes and dislikes
3. Medical needs –Indemnify the school for all prescription medicine to be administered. All relevant training must be given to the staff members involved before administration of this medicine (where necessary).
4. Food allergies
5. Hygiene needs
6. Family members and extended family and friends.

**Changes in family circumstances** e.g. the arrival of a new baby, moving home, parental separation, the death of a grandparent, etc. can have an effect on your child. You may wish to notify the class teacher of any such changes.

### Dress/Clothing/Belongings

A large part of our school programme for your child is building up his/her 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. School Tracksuits are acceptable and recommended for the younger children attending the class for children with A.S.D.
3. Togs, hat and towel are needed for swimming.
4. Put your child's name on everything that is worn to school.
5. Keeping a change of clothes in the school for your child if requested.
6. All money sent to school should be in an envelope and clearly labelled, or preferably deposited via our online payment system.

### 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 if necessary, and wipes if your child is still in nappies or being toilet trained.

### Illness

Every child's health is important to us. In order to ensure the highest standard of medical care, the following 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 or SNAs are unable to administer medication without consultation with parents and the Principal. Please contact the Principal for arrangements
5. Never send medication to school with your child. It should always be handed from adult to adult.

# Autism Spectrum Disorder A.S.D Policy

## Ballyadams N.S

### Healthy Eating

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. We ask that children do not have chocolate, crisps or sweets. Please inform the school if your child has a special dietary requirement or any food allergies.

### Homework

Homework is discussed on an individual basis with the Class Teacher.

### Information and Communication Technology

The staff will 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 Officer.

Assistive technology approved by the NCSE remains the property of the school and will remain in school each day unless otherwise stated by the class teacher.

### Toileting

When a child is in nappies or being toilet trained, any member of staff dealing directly with this child will be involved in the personal care of this child. Please refer to our Intimate Care Policy.

### Medication

Any necessary training for staff members relating to a child's medical needs, will be given in advance of administering any medications. See Illness section above.

### Break-time Procedures

We aim for integration with the other mainstream children at break time. We encourage children to be confident enough to seek out their friends from the mainstream classes to play with. The staff are vigilant at all times in the play area and a supervision system is in place. If necessary, children will be taken from the yard and supervised individually or in a small group as appropriate.

### Admissions and Enrolment

The Board of Management of Ballyadams N.S. has an Admissions Policy in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status ACT 2000, Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004 and the Admissions to Schools Act 2018.

### Health Service Executive Input

Essential services are provided by the Health Service Executive. These services include Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy. **Ballyadams N.S has no control over these services, merely acting as relevant setting for their provision.** All queries about these services must be addressed to the Health Service Executive and not Ballyadams N.S.

### Criteria for enrolment

The criteria for enrolment in the special class, incorporating the Department of Education and Skills and the HSE's policies is as follows:

Each child must have:

- A definite diagnosis of Autism (A.S.D). A specific recommendation from a psychologist stating that placement in an ASD Unit attached to a mainstream school is the most appropriate in the applicant's case.
- An up to date psychological assessment (i.e. within two calendar years of projected enrolment date) which must indicate cognitive ability.

# Autism Spectrum Disorder A.S.D Policy

## Ballyadams N.S

- If the child presents with a general learning disability, it must fall within or above the mild range (this diagnosis must also be made from a professionally recognised clinical and psychological assessment procedure).
- Complex needs – the report needs to clearly specify the complex needs (bullet points)
- Children must be aged between 4-12 years of age to qualify for enrolment.

### Admissions Team

Each application will be considered by the Admissions Team. The team will include:

- Principal: Rory Stapleton
- Deputy Principal: Máirtín Mullooly
- Special Education Teaching Coordinator: Martina Burke

### Allocation of Places

The Department of Education and Skills advises that a special class for children with ASD should consist of 6 pupils. If the number of children on the list of applicants exceeds the number of places available, please refer to Section 5 of our Admissions Policy. The Admissions Team will consider each application if/when a place becomes available.

Once a place has been offered to a child;

- The parents of a child being offered a place in the class will be invited to visit the class to meet with the teacher and/or the Head of the SEN and / or Deputy Principal and the Principal.
- The parents may be asked by the school to consent to a visit by a member of staff to a child's pre-school to observe the child or to speak to the pre-school teacher.
- The parents/guardians will be invited to come with their child to the class to meet with members of staff and to see the classroom.
- The child will be allocated a mainstream class for integration purposes. Where possible this will be at the class level of the child, however, in exceptional circumstances this may not be the most appropriate setting and due consideration will be given to the needs of the child in these cases.

### Integration and Inclusion of pupils from the Class for children with A.S.D into Mainstream Classes

Section 2 of the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004 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:

- The best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under this act, or
- The effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated'.

The amount of integration/reverse integration that each child receives in Ballyadams N.S. 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. **However, the staff's decision is final.**

Early levels of integration into mainstream are on a social level only. The child from the class for children with A.S.D will not partake in general class learning until they have mastered the art of:

- Entering the class without trepidation
- Sitting down at a designated desk

# Autism Spectrum Disorder A.S.D Policy

## Ballyadams N.S

- Interacting on a social level with the child(ren) nearest them
- Having lunch with the whole class
- Acting on general teacher instructions within the classroom setting.

Having adjusted on a social level the child from the class for children with A.S.D will be introduced to areas of the curriculum appropriate to ability level. Integration into this class will continue up through the classes as appropriate. The children from the A.S.D Class are included in the school sports day and all school events and activities where practicable and as appropriate.

Ballyadams N.S. is primarily a mainstream primary school. The *overarching aim of our school community is the maximum integration of all pupils. To this extent it should be understood, it is our aim to integrate all pupils enrolled in our class for children with A.S.D into the mainstream class groupings to the greatest degree possible.* We endeavour to integrate pupils from the ASD class into their mainstream class as follows;

- 1 hour by the end of 1<sup>st</sup> class
- 2 hours by the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> class
- 3 hours by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> class
- Full integration by the start of 5<sup>th</sup> Class

*Professional reports need to indicate that this level of integration is a reasonable target for the pupil going forward.*

### Reverse Integration

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

1. The child from the class for children with A.S.D being integrated for core curriculum subjects such as Maths and English initially through reverse integration whereby 2-6 children from the mainstream class are withdrawn to join the child in their own environment. It is hoped that this will in the long-term lead to conventional 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. Children from the mainstream classes engage in life skills integration on a weekly basis.

### Discharge from Special Class

If the child is not reaching these integration milestones above, this should be deemed the point whereby the Admissions Team meet with the parents to discuss the most appropriate placement of the child, and if this school is the correct environment for the child to reach their full educational potential.

Discharge may also be recommended at any time if the admission team, after consultation with the parents / guardians, feel that the placement is not appropriate. Discharge from the special classes may also happen if a pupil is fully integrated into the mainstream school.

### Behaviour

It is accepted that children with special educational needs may display difficult, defiant or oppositional behaviours. All efforts will be made by the school to manage such behaviour using various strategies and through the implementation of the child's Student Support Plus Plan. **All pupils, including special needs pupils and non-special needs pupils, are subject to the School Code of Behaviour and Health & Safety Statement.** Where a child's behaviour impacts in a negative way on the other children in the A.S.D class or another mainstream class to the extent that their constitutional right to an education is being interfered with as judged by the Board of

# Autism Spectrum Disorder A.S.D Policy

## Ballyadams N.S

Management of the School, or if the health and safety of members of our school community is threatened, the school reserves the right to advise parents that a school placement that's more appropriate to the child's needs should be sought. The Board of Management reserve the right to advise when children need to be sent home or kept at home at the Principal's discretion. Restraint will only be used if and when necessary and this will be discussed with parents as it arises. A written record of all behaviours will be noted in these circumstances.

### 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
2. Responsibility for the provision of in-service training and adequate resourcing
3. Monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and making relevant adjustment following consultation
4. Working with parents and out-of-school agencies.

#### Special Class Teachers

1. Will identify the appropriate curriculum area the child in the Class for children with A.S.D should experience.
2. Ensure SNA support is available during any period of integration **where necessary**.
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 SSPP in consultation with the relevant support services, parents and the Principal. At present each Special Class Teacher is only obliged to produce one SSPP per school year. It is up to the professional opinion of the teacher involved if the SSPP needs to be updated more frequently.

#### Class Teachers

1. Will differentiate teaching programmes to meet the needs of the child from the class for children with A.S.D.
2. Provide a suitable seating arrangement in a mainstream setting
3. Collaborate with the Special Class Teacher and the SNA
4. Provide feedback on progress.

#### Special Needs Assistants

Each class will be allocated a number of SNAs by the area SENO. Generally, the SNAs are allocated to the school and employed by the Department of Education and Skills. They are not assigned to any one child and there is great scope in their job specification to move between classes when needs arise. This is at the discretion of the principal. Their main role is to cater for the care needs of the children they're assigned to and to assist the class teacher with the specific goals and targets set down in the child's SSPP.

#### Implementation

The policy is open to review at all times.

#### Ratification

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting of the Board on

# Autism Spectrum Disorder A.S.D Policy

## Ballyadams N.S

Signed: Daniel Durnul (Chairperson)

Date: 14/2/22

Signed: Rory Steptoe (Principal)

Date: 14.2.22

I agree to the terms and conditions of the above Policy in Ballyadams N.S.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent / Guardian)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent / Guardian)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_