



*Principal: Mr. Ken Scully M.Ed*  
**Enrolment Policy for Special Educational Needs Unit in  
Scoil Ghráinne Community National School**

### **Introduction**

Scoil Ghráinne operates an inclusive enrolment policy and does not favour any particular religion or cultural background. The children hoping to attend our ASD classes must have a recommendation that they should attend a special needs unit in a mainstream setting within their reports. This policy is set out in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000 and the Disability Act 2002. The manager trusts that by so doing, parents will be assisted in relation to enrolment matters. Furthermore, the manager and the Principal will be happy to clarify any further matters arising from the policy.

### **General information**

Scoil Ghráinne operates within the regulations laid down by the Department of Education & Science and follows the primary school curriculum prescribed by the Department of Education & Science which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with Sections 9 and 30 of the Education Act (1998). The on-going internal monitoring by Principal and staff will be supported by external evaluation by the Department of Education & Skills Inspectorate.

Scoil Ghráinne Community National School is a co-educational Primary School which is under the temporary patronage of The Minister for Education & Skills. Scoil Ghráinne is one of eleven Community National Schools in Ireland. The school aims to promote the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the child: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual. Scoil Ghráinne seeks to provide a high standard of education where each child is encouraged to reach his/her personal potential. The school is committed to a spirit of inclusion, equality and harmony where each child and member of the school community is valued and treated with respect.

Scoil Ghráinne caters for children of all faiths and none. It is the policy of Scoil Ghráinne to respect, celebrate and recognise diversity in all areas of human life. Children attending Scoil Ghráinne will be taught and encouraged to view diversity as something which reflects the community from which the children are drawn. The school will endeavour to encourage the children committed to its care to have a pride in what makes them different and a belief that difference, when respected and valued, gives strength and vibrancy to the total school community and the wider community

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in which they live. In common with the other Community National Schools under E.T.B. patronage, Scoil Ghráinne will recognise the wishes of parents to have their children receive religious education or morality based education as an integral part of the school curriculum.

Scoil Ghráinne opened in September 2008 with Junior Infant classes. Scoil Ghráinne will have a three stream intake each year. The school is located in Phibblestown (adjacent to Hansfield Road) and shares a site with the post-primary school for the area - Coláiste Pobail Setanta - which also opened in September 2008.

Scoil Ghráinne Community National School is a developing school and will cater for the full range of Primary classes, from Junior Infants to Sixth Class, as the school grows. When completed, Scoil Ghráinne will have capacity to cater for up to 24 classes.

Under E.T.B. patronage, a management board will be established. In the interim, Scoil Ghráinne will continue to be managed by a single manager. The manager/board of management will be committed to the successful implementation of recent legislation, in particular the Education Act, 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Equal Status Act 2000. The manager/board of management will fully subscribe to the principles of partnership, accountability, transparency, inclusion and respect for diversity, parental choice and equality.

In view of the pilot nature of the new patronage model and population change within the area served by the school, this admissions policy will be subject to regular review and possible change.

### **Context of Scoil Ghráinne Community National School and it's SNU**

Scoil Ghráinne Community National School is situated on a campus with Coláiste Pobail Setanta. The Coláiste also has a unit for children with Autism.

In September 2010, we admitted the first cohort of pupils into our special needs unit (SNU), which we call Croí. In September 2011 Scoil Ghráinne admitted a further 6 pupils in our second class. We currently cater for 12 children with Autism.

### **Provision within the special needs unit**

The school has a purpose built Autistic Unit which caters for 12 children and it is envisaged that the children who attend the unit would be suitable for integration into the mainstream school. We have a Sensory Room, a classroom and toilet facilities, a ball-pool and kitchen facilities which are all purpose built for our special needs unit and meet all criteria as set out by the Department of Education and Skills. The unit will seek to provide the highest quality of education in collaboration with the external services the children are currently linked in with, such as: Daughters of Charity, Beechpark Services, Temple Street Hospital and the Early Intervention Team who provide multi-disciplinary support services consisting of: Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Psychology and Social work.

## **Type of Special Needs Unit**

Following consultation with our Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO), our National Education Psychological Services (NEPS) Psychologist, our Single Manager, our patron body 'Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB', school staff and parents, it was decided that Scoil Ghráinne CNS could best facilitate the needs of the community by continuing to operate a Special Needs Unit which would cater for children who have an Autistic spectrum disorder.

## **Vision for our Special Needs Unit**

Scoil Ghráinne CNS seeks at all times to provide a caring learning environment where each child is welcomed, respected, cherished and facilitated in reaching their full potential whatever their background, nationality or faith.

Our special needs unit is an additional support mechanism for pupils with autism who fulfil the criteria for admission into the SNU and who would find attending mainstream on a full-time basis challenging. Our special needs unit is a unit within the overall school and as such forms an integral part of the school community. As far as possible the SNU will be integrated into the day to day activities of the school and it is envisaged that children attending the unit will, as far as possible, participate in school related events.

One of the aims of the unit is to integrate children with autism into the mainstream school community. Accordingly, children who attend the special unit will be integrated into appropriate mainstream classes. The rate of this integration will be determined by the professional personnel assigned to the class in consultation with the parents.

Our vision for our special needs unit is that children attending the unit will feel secure and happy in school. Our objectives are to give each child an individualised programme of work that focuses in on their strengths and difficulties in relation to communication and social skills within a structured and safe environment, thus enabling them to achieve their full potential and experience a happy and fulfilling school life.

Scoil Ghráinne Community National School is a learning community where the holistic development of each child is paramount. We envisage that our special needs unit will be a partnership between children, parents, staff and the various outside agencies that link in with the school and are working on behalf of the children. As such, Scoil Ghráinne CNS seeks to ensure that all members of the school community work in partnership, having the best interest of pupils at heart and the overall development of the special needs unit.

## **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to provide a special needs unit which is welcoming, holistic in its approach, child centred, reflective of current teaching and good practice in relation to pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Our special needs unit seeks to create learning opportunities in a setting of diversity and inclusion. Our special needs unit

caters for the physical, academic, social, emotional and spiritual needs of children within the school day in a supportive and caring environment.

Our mission is for all pupils attending our special needs unit to learn to their full potential in a caring, educational and safe environment.

Our SNU aims to:

- Remove/reduce a child's barriers to learning,
- Assist children to develop effective systems of communication and social interaction,
- Develop a child's ability to adapt to, and accommodate change,
- Encourage children to positively manage their own behaviour and difficulties,
- Provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets each child's needs, including access to the Primary School Curriculum,
- Provide an environment that fosters care and monitors and provides interventions for pupils to enhance learning opportunities,
- Provide inclusive opportunities for children to integrate into mainstream as part of the continuum of education provision,
- Work in partnership with parents/carers and other professionals.

### **Ethos and Values of our special needs unit**

Scoil Ghráinne CNS seeks to provide an environment within which students feel happy, safe and valued. A positive and supportive approach is adopted in addressing the unique and special needs of each of the students. Emphasis is placed upon building on the child's strengths, thus enabling progression in all aspects of his or her development. Close liaison with parents and relevant outside agencies affords the opportunity to address the needs of the "whole child." Shared aims and objectives between home and school provide the children with clear and consistent guidelines in terms of behavioural codes and the reinforcement of personal and social skills in a variety of settings.

### **Curriculum**

Students attending our special needs unit are encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-advocacy and self-discipline. The school plays an active role in promoting these qualities. Through direct intervention (and by adult example) students are encouraged to develop an awareness and respect for each other, the staff and their surroundings. Pupils are also encouraged to care for their own belongings and respect those of others, to foster appropriate and socially acceptable forms of behaviour and to take pride in their own strengths and achievements. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and, in the long term, develop a sense of self-discipline. In achieving this aim, each child is supported in developing individual strategies and responses to calmly diffuse or manage potentially difficult situations. From a staff perspective emphasis is placed upon recognising and rewarding positive behaviour.

Individual educational plans and behavioural plans will be put in place for each child. These will be drawn up in consultation with parents and the relevant outside agencies. All behaviour management programmes are discussed with parents and appropriate

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strategies, which can be followed both at home and in school, are developed. Students generally respond well to the structured environment of the school and it is our aim to manage or modify difficult behaviours. Parents are encouraged to approach the school if they wish to discuss a particular problem. In addition to these plans the school together with parents, will be instrumental in establishing and implementing a code of behaviour for the special needs unit. Students attending the unit are treated with dignity and respect and are encouraged to make their own decisions and choices and share ideas and opinions wherever possible.

### **Approaches to teaching and learning in our SNU**

In Scoil Ghráinne Community National School we believe in an eclectic approach to pupils learning in our ASD Unit. This is in accordance with the Department of Education and Skills recommendation. The school will be cognisant of current theories and methods of teaching. Pupils with autism generally display significant difficulties within the 'Triad of Impairment' which is at the heart of autism. These impairments relate to:

- difficulties in language and communication,
- social relationships, and
- Rigid patterns of behaviour/thought/interests.

These difficulties form major barriers to learning. Our role is to help our pupils to come to terms with, and overcome as far as possible these difficulties.

The Primary School Curriculum will be the guiding education programme with additional emphasis on:

- behavioural management
- the development of adaptive and independence skills
- social and communication skills

In order for the teacher to develop individualised educational plans, a period of observation and baseline assessment will be necessary.

### **Code of Behaviour**

In keeping with the NEWB guidelines, the school will be drawing up a code of behaviour for the special needs unit. Included in this code of behaviour will be the possibility, in certain extreme cases that a student may be temporarily suspended from school or permanently excluded should their behaviour put the safety and welfare of other students and staff members at risk. All reasonable steps to reduce or prevent such extreme behaviour would be taken prior to considering suspension or expulsion.

### **Meeting with parents and children**

Meetings will be held with parents and children seeking admission to the special needs unit to discuss the individual needs of the child. Permission will be sought from the parents to visit the child's pre-school placement (where relevant) with a view to speaking to staff members about the child's needs, academic/social development and capabilities. If it is considered from these meetings and conversations that the school can successfully address the child's needs (and the child is capable of meaningful

integration both in the unit and in mainstream classroom) then the child and family will be invited to the school several times to become accustomed to the school and meet with staff. The purpose of these meetings and conversations is:

- to inform the decision as to whether or not the special needs unit in Scoil Ghráinne CNS is an appropriate placement for the child
- and to facilitate the smooth transition into school if accepted.

### **Registration Procedure for Croí**

As our unit is currently full all applicants will be placed on a waiting list. The criteria for selection are detailed below.

### **Criteria for Enrolment**

1. Each child must have a diagnosis of Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorder using the DM IV (V) or ICD 10 criteria as set out by a professional/individual approved by the Department of Education and Skills and a Multi-Disciplinary assessment report. This report must be current (within the last 12 months)
2. A recommendation that a special class placement is best suited to the child's needs must be clearly stated in the child's psychological assessment.
3. As inclusion is an integral part of our school ethos, it is a necessary criteria of enrolment that any child attending the unit must have the potential of integrating into a mainstream classroom setting. Thus, their level of autism mustn't prevent the child from interacting appropriately and integrating into mainstream. Furthermore the child's cognitive level must allow him/her to integrate academically and socially in the mainstream school setting as well as the ASD unit. The level of integration, duration and timing will be decided upon by the principal and staff of the unit in consultation with the mainstream teacher, parents of the child in question and on the basis of information shared at an annual review meeting.
4. A fully completed application form must be filled in by the parents and any relevant reports must be submitted to the school.
5. The completion of an application form does not constitute an offer of a place.
6. The child must be at least 4 years of age on or before the 30<sup>th</sup> June prior to starting school.

**In the event that the number of children that apply for a place is greater than the number of places available the following categories shall be used as a basis for prioritising children;**

#### **A:**

1. Children on the waiting list (arranged by date of application)
2. Priority is given to brothers and sisters of children currently attending Scoil Ghráinne CNS (including step-siblings, resident at the same address)
3. Children living in the catchment area. (see full list attached)

*Then*

**B**: *Children living outside the catchment area unless the area in which they live is within the catchment area of another Community National School which has vacancies in their special needs unit.*

- In the event of the number of children in category **A** exceed the number of places available, children within this category, upon examination of their application form and various reports, will be offered a place according to their date of application.
- The same criteria will be adapted in relation to category **B**, until all places are filled.
- All unsuccessful applicants will continue to hold a place on a waiting list, in accordance with the above criteria for places that may become available at a later date. Priority on the waiting list will be decided in accordance with the date of registration.
- All unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing by post of their place on the waiting list.
- All unsuccessful applicants have a right of appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998.

***Requests for enrolment forms should be made to:***

*School Secretary,  
Scoil Ghráinne,  
Phibblestown,  
Clonee,  
Dublin 15.*

*Telephone: (01) 640 2418*

***Registration alone does not guarantee a place in the school. Decisions in relation to applications for enrolment are made by the Manager/Board of Management in accordance with the enrolment policy.***

It is the duty of parents to ensure that with the application form the school has **all** of the following:

- A.** An original long form Birth Certificate (together with a photocopy)
- B. Two** of the following as proof of address (these must be dated within two months of application):
  - a. ESB Bill
  - b. Gas Bill
  - c. Landline Telephone Bill
  - d. NTL Bill
  - e. Lease Agreement

**C. A Diagnosis from a Psychiatrist, psychologist, or a multi-disciplinary team that has assessed and classified the applicant as having autism or autistic spectrum disorder according to DSM-IV(V) or ICD 10 criteria.**

**N.B.** If the school does not receive this documentation with the enrolment application the application will not be processed.

### **Return of Forms of Acceptance**

Letters of offer for places in the unit for autism will be sent upon confirmation of a vacancy. Acceptance forms must be returned within two weeks of the letter of offer. If the school does not receive the acceptance form within one week the place will be offered to the next child on the waiting list.

### **Equality of access**

No child will be refused admission for reasons of religion, language, gender, social status, ethnicity or political beliefs and values. However, all children attending the unit must have the potential to integrate into the mainstream setting. It is also a criteria that the special needs unit is capable of meeting the child's individual needs in a meaningful way.

***This policy is subject to regular review by the Manager / Board of Management***

***Signed:*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Mr Ian Murphy***  
***Single Manager***

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

***Appendix 1: Catchment Area***