



## **Policy for ASD Class**

Date ratified by the Board of Management:

**School Patron: The Right Rev. Dr. Paul Colton,  
Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross**

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Chairperson: Mr Daniel Emerson

Principal: Ms Jill Horan

This document is intended to provide details of the main policies of St. Multose National School. It is intended to help parents and guardians understand the environment and approach of the school. This document is regularly reviewed. All feedback is encouraged and welcome.

### **Introductory Statement**

The policy was formulated having been identified in a Risk Assessment as an area that required clarification. It was devised by members of policy committee and proposed to the Board of Management for approval and ratification. The policy has been formulated in light of a number of background documents, including the Health & Safety Authority's Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work (2007) and the Equality Authority's Code of Practice, given legal effect in the Statutory Instrument entitled Employment Equality Act 1998 (Code of Practice) (Harassment) Order 2002 (S.I. No. 78 of 2002). All staff were consulted in the process of devising this policy.

### **Rationale**

Following advice from the SENO, the decision to provide a Special Class for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in St. Multose National School, was taken by the Board of Management (BoM) of the school in conjunction with the principal, staff and school community in February 2021. This decision was made with a view to providing an appropriate, specialist education within a mainstream setting for children who want to attend our school.

### **Relationship to the characteristic spirit of the school**

At St. Multose N.S. we endeavour to create a well-functioning, happy and safe environment which promotes the dignity and individuality of every pupil, enabling them to reach their full potential, within a Christian atmosphere and in partnership with parents/guardians and the wider community.

St. Multose N.S. is a school which, in accordance with the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018 serves mainly those of a 'minority' religion. Traditionally, the school has catered for members of the Church of Ireland, other Anglican churches, The Methodist Church, The Presbyterian Church and The Baptist Church. Also, when undersubscribed we welcome children from the local Roman Catholic Church, as well as those of other religions or of no particular faith.

St. Multose N.S. is a community where all pupils are equally valued and respected – irrespective of ethnic background, religion, gender, social background, family circumstances, educational achievement, physical characteristics, or intellectual functioning. We would like pupils and their families to experience a sense of caring and belonging. They are treated fairly, and their spiritual, moral, and religious development is encouraged, as is their intellectual, social, and academic development.

The Policy for ASD Class recognises and endeavours to adopt the values that are set out in the ethos of Church of Ireland. It attempts to support and sustain a harmonious environment in which the potential pupils are nurtured through the co-operation between staff, pupils, parents, board members and all other relevant parties.

## **Aims**

This policy aims to:

- Promote the use of positive language.
- Outline the key roles and responsibilities of the Principal, Síológa class teacher, mainstream teacher, and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)
- Outline guidelines to help children transitioning to the Síológa class
- Explain approaches to integration and inclusion for the children in the Special Class.
- Describe approaches to teaching, learning and assessment.
- Encourage participation in ASD specific Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in order to enrich teaching in the Special Classes.
- Explain the role of outside agencies.
- Outline the equipment, material and resources used within the Special Classes.
- Establish the link between this policy and other school policies.
- Describe management of behaviour specific to pupils in Síológa
- Outline well-being supports available to pupils and staff in Síológa
- Provide information about July Provision

## **Positive Language**

'Síológa' is an Irish word which in English, translates to 'Seedlings'. We use the term "Síológa" We do not use the term "autism unit" or "autistic class" (although these terms may be used in some Department of Education (DE) and National Council for Special Education (NCSE) correspondence. Where young typically developing children have questions about the personality and/or behaviours of a child on the autistic spectrum, we answer those questions in a matter-of-fact, positive way. Often, practical differences are explained. Sometimes, depending on the age of the children it may be appropriate to use the word "autism" if that would help avoid misunderstandings.

## **Key Roles and Responsibilities**

### **The roles and responsibilities of the principal includes;**

- Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the policy in co-operation with the Board of Management, Teachers, parents and children
- Staffing arrangements i.e., SNA supports, teachers, substitutes, bus escorts,
- Manage the enrolment procedure
- Monitor the implementation of the policy on an ongoing basis
- Keep relevant teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedure to be followed in relation to referrals within the Síológa setting
- Support teachers and SNAs to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of ASD
- Being a member of the admissions team
- Upholding the Code of Behaviour of the school, where appropriate
- Ensure that all Síológa staff have received the appropriate training.

### **The roles and responsibilities of the Síológa teacher includes;**

- Being the main point of contact for the child's parents/guardians
- Involving parents in the educational process, eg. Support Plans, Home-School Communication Diaries, etc.
- Preparing new pupils Support Plans within six weeks of the first term of the school year in consultation with parents, and in liaison with other staff working with the child.
- Developing a suitable classroom environment
- Initiating a review of that Support Plan each term and organising venue, date and time to consult with parents, mainstream class teacher and SNAs.
- Planning and implementing educational provision for children enrolled in Síológa.
- Support Plans being used as long-term planning and fortnightly plans for short-term planning to enable progression over time
- Co-ordinating the supporting work of the Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) on an ongoing basis
- Working with the mainstream class teacher to identify regular opportunities for integration or reverse integration, where appropriate
- Working with the mainstream class teacher to identify and implement accommodations that the child with ASD may need to be successful in the mainstream classroom, where appropriate
- Upholding the Code of Behaviour of the school, where appropriate

- Ensure that all Síológa staff have received the appropriate training in conjunction with managing behaviour - Management of Actual and Potential Aggression (MAPA).

**The roles and responsibilities of the mainstream class teacher includes;**

- Working with the Síológa teacher to identify regular opportunities for integration or reverse integration, where appropriate
- Working with the Síológa teacher and SNAs to implement accommodations that the child with ASD may need to be successful in the mainstream classroom, where appropriate
- Providing input, where appropriate, during the review stages of the Support Plans and attending Support Plan review meetings, where possible
- Being aware of children's learning targets during integration and using appropriate strategies and methodologies, as guided by the Síológa class teacher.

**The roles and responsibilities of the Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) include;**

- Assisting with the care/safety/supervision needs of the children – in the classrooms and around the school, on the playground and on school trips
- Assisting with behavioural management programmes
- Guiding the child through tasks and activities designed by the Síológa teacher or the mainstream class teacher
- Data collection/reporting on progress as determined by the Síológa teacher or Principal
- Providing special assistance to children as necessary
- Preparing materials/resources for the children, under the guidance of the Síológa class teacher or the mainstream class teacher
- Providing input, where appropriate, during the review stages of the Support Plans and attending Support Plan review meetings, where possible

**Transitioning to Síológa**

The following guidelines should be followed to help to prepare a child before transitioning to the Síológa Class:

- Principal and/or Síológa teacher to meet with the child's parents to discuss strengths, interests, sensory preferences, motivators, etc.
- With parental consent, Síológa teacher to contact pre-school setting/crèche to liaise with staff in this setting. See Transitioning Booklet.
- Síológa teacher to access child's professional reports and previous IEPs where possible.

- Provide the child's parents with a social story to include pictures of the school, the classroom and, where possible, the staff working in the school.
- Invite the child and his/her parents for a visit to the class when other children are not there to allow him/her to explore the environment and meet the teacher and SNAs
- The above information should be recorded, stored in the child's file and used to begin the child's individualised planning process
- Provide the parents with a transition schedule to outline the dates and times for which the child will attend for the first 3 weeks of school.
- The child should be on a full day within one month where possible. This transition schedule should be approved by the principal or the ASD-coordinator before being shared with parents.

### **Integration and Inclusion**

- Integration with typically developing peers in inclusive mainstream classroom environments, in so far as possible, is the school's aim. The nature of all integration shall be determined by the Síológa teacher following reviews at appropriate intervals and in consultation with the parents, mainstream class teacher, Principal and SNAs.
- Integration should be meaningful for the child, i.e. there should be a clear goal which has been communicated to all staff involved.
- "Partial Integration" will take the form of contact during specific situations or curricular areas, where particular skills and interests and/or learning can be advanced. The length of time for which a child is integrated into mainstream is based on the individual needs of each child. "Increasing Integration" will be put in place for children who are successful in the integrated setting. Success criteria will be based on the level of meaningful learning and functioning within the setting. Integration should not be decreased without consulting parents and relevant staff.
- Children will be included in whole-school events as much as possible, e.g. school assemblies, school tours, school performances, sports days, fund-raising activities, swimming lessons, etc. In specific cases, where stated in a child's Behaviour Plan, a child's parents may be asked to attend swimming lessons or outings outside of the school.
- Appropriate supports should be put in place prior to integration into mainstream classes to promote positive and successful experiences for the child, e.g. support or training of mainstream teachers in relation to appropriate approaches (e.g. communication and behaviour management strategies), SNA support, the use of

appropriate visuals, environmental adaptations in the mainstream class if necessary.

- Methods for communication between the ASD-class teacher and the mainstream teachers should be agreed, e.g. communication book/chart, planning meetings.
- “Reverse Integration” will be put in place for children where integration in the integrated setting is not appropriate. It can be used as a stepping-stone to and/or in conjunction with Partial Integration. The focus of “Reverse Integration” will be on social and play skills only.
- The minimum level of integration and inclusion for all pupils, where appropriate, will include some lunch times, some group activities, and some playground breaks.
- Teachers should be mindful of the number of children integrated into a mainstream class at any one time, i.e. no more than 3 children per class at a time unless appropriate. Integration should not disrupt teaching and learning in the mainstream class.

### **Approaches to Teaching and Learning**

The children will access a curriculum based on the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and the Primary Language Curriculum (PLC, 2019) that is matched to their needs and capabilities, through carefully planned Support Plans and through the use of differentiation strategies.

Subject areas include; English, Maths, Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Music, Visual Arts, Drama, Physical Education and Religious Education.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessments Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities will be used to augment the implementation of the curriculum.

Children who have a recommendation of education in a Síológa setting do not necessarily qualify for an exemption from Gaeilge. An exemption must be recommended by a psychologist or a speech & language therapist. This exemption must be applied for through the principal and NEPs. It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that their child has the appropriate exemption, if necessary.

Note: The Stay Safe Programme is compulsory and must be delivered at an appropriately differentiated level each year as part of the school SPHE plan.

An eclectic approach to teaching shall be used within Síológa, that is, a range of approaches (including those used in the school's mainstream classes) shall be employed, based on the individual needs of the children. The main approaches are as follows, but are not limited to; play, language through play, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication – Handicapped Children (TEACCH), Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), Intensive Interaction & Relationship Development, Floortime, Language Through Colour and Social Stories.

The implementation of the primary school curriculum will be enhanced through a programme of trips to local places, designed to help further prepare the children for successful living in our community (playground visits, coffee shop, shopping tasks, post office, swimming, etc.). Typically developing peers may also participate in elements of this programme.

### **Approaches to Assessment**

Similar assessment requirements apply in the Special Classes for ASD as in mainstream classes. Teachers are required to keep an Assessment Folder with information relating to the learning progress of the students in the curriculum subjects that they are accessing. There should be an additional focus, however, on children's language and communication, behaviour, social and emotional development, play, leisure skills, sensory differences and independence.

The assessment process should constructively link with the individualised planning process. Assessment strategies used may be similar to those that are employed in mainstream classes, where appropriate, e.g.

- Checklists
- Observation profiles
- Teacher designed tasks and tests
- Portfolio of work, work samples

Note: Children in 2nd, 4th and 6th class are not exempt from Standardised Testing without prior approval from the principal.

Autism-specific assessment and profiling tools are available for use in the Síológa for ASD as required. These tools are useful for setting specific individualised targets for students' IEPs. Autism-specific assessment tools include:

- Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS)
- Verbal Behaviour Milestones Assessment and Placement Programme (VB-MAPP)
- Psychoeducational Profile – Third Edition (PEP-3)

### **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

The BOM will support the accessing of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) by staff. Relevant specialist training is accessed via the Special Education Support Service (SESS) and relevant personnel on staff of St. Multose NS. All teachers will be expected to complete the following CPD within the first year of teaching in the Síológa setting;

- Management of Actual and Potential Aggression (MAPA) – 2 Day Course
- Contemporary Applied Behavioural Analysis (C-ABA) or Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication – Handicapped Children (TEACCH)
- An Introduction to ASD (Primary)
- A list of other courses available from the NCSE are displayed on their: <https://www.sess.ie/professional-development>

SNAs working in are expected to have completed the MAPA 2 Day Course also.

### **The Role of Outside Services**

Support from outside services such as the Health Service Executive (HSE), Marian House, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), etc., is available to the children and parents of Síológa. However, due to a lack of resources and long waiting lists these resources are extremely limited. No HSE therapies, such as Occupational Therapy or Speech & Language Therapy are provided at the school. However, where a child has access to such supports in a local clinic, health centre or in a private capacity, those professionals will liaise with the Síológa teacher and/or visit the school from time to time.

### **Equipment and Resources**

The children in Síológa will have access to equipment and resources which are recommended in their psychological reports, occupational therapy reports and speech & language therapy reports, where possible. When a recommendation is made for a child for a specific piece of equipment such as a sit and lean cushion, a slant board, etc. the parents of the child will be expected to pay for the equipment and as such it is the property of the child. Resources such as therapy, therabands, fine motor equipment and gross motor equipment will be, where possible, provided by the school.

Children in the Síológa will have access to a Sensory Area when needed. Resources and Assessment Kits, for example the VB-MAPP kit, PEP-3 kit, ABLLS remain in the Síológa classroom and can be loaned to resource teachers and mainstream teachers, where needed.

### **Reference to Other Policies**

The Classes for Children with ASD Policy is linked to other policies within the school;

- The Code of Behaviour.
- Admissions and Participation Policy, including enrolment in the Special Class.
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement

### **Management of Behaviour**

NOTE: The school Code of Behaviour applies to all children in the school, including the children in Síológa. It is accepted that children with ASD may display challenging, defiant or oppositional behaviour. All efforts will be made by the school to manage such behaviours according to specific strategies outlined in a child's behaviour plan.

Incidences of behaviour misdemeanours should be consistently recorded by the Síológa staff in an agreed format, e.g. ABC charts, behaviour tracking charts, 5 point scale. Behaviours should be analysed in order to identify the potential triggers or the functions of the behaviour. Serious behaviour misdemeanours should be recorded on Aladdin by the Síológa teacher.

If a child displays repeated and consistent negative behaviours, the information from these behaviour charts should be used to develop a behaviour plan, in collaboration and agreement with the parents of the child and supporting services, where possible. A behaviour plan should outline a clear behaviour goal, or 'desired replacement behaviour'. Staff should select appropriate intervention strategies based on the function of the behaviour. All staff working with this child should employ these strategies consistently.

### **Management of Extreme Serious Behaviour Misdemeanors**

Síológa class staff should adapt the Emergency Safety Plan (Appendix A) which outlines procedures to be followed in the incidence of an extreme challenging behaviour.

The Board of Management advises that the procedures to be followed include:

- Serious incidences of behaviour misdemeanours should be communicated immediately to the principal.
- Serious incidences of behaviour may include a child's attempts to injure him or herself or attempts to injure another person.
- Where the behaviour of one child escalates to the extent that the safety of children or staff are at risk, all other children should be evacuated from the room.

- Staff are not trained in manual handling and the Board of Management does not advise the use of this approach. Staff should not attempt to move a child who is experiencing a serious behaviour tantrum or meltdown. Staff should remove any items which the child may use to hurt him or herself and supervise the child from a safe distance.
- If a child or staff member is seriously injured, staff should notify the office/principal immediately and an ambulance or GP will be called, the principal informed and parents/guardians contacted.
- Staff may administer First Aid if needed.
- If there are less than 2 SNAs present, ring the closest member of staff is notified immediately and help is sought. Where a child's behaviour impacts in a negative way on the education or safety of other children in the class, or on the safety of staff, sanctions may be applied as outlined in the school Code of Behaviour.
- Confidentiality: It is important that all pupils and staff are treated with dignity and respect at all times. Issues relating to the behaviours or care needs of the children should not be discussed by staff (teachers, SNAs, bus escorts) outside of the classroom.

## **Wellbeing**

### **Pupil Wellbeing**

Children with ASD often experience difficulty recognising, verbalising and expressing their own emotions. As such, the following supports are put into place in the ASD-classes in order to safeguard and foster the well-being of the children who attend:

- Teaching communication systems: Staff train children in the use of functional communication systems to help them learn to express their emotions, needs and wants, e.g. PECS (e.g. using PECS book)
- Communication with parents: Staff consistently monitor, observe and record the behaviours and moods of the children in the class. If concerns arise as to the wellbeing of one of the children, (e.g. low moods, poor eating or hygiene behaviours, consistent challenging behaviours), this will be discussed with parents and with available external professionals.
- Calming activities: Children will engage in calming activities and sensory regulation activities throughout the day, according to his or her needs. Children's sensory regulation is regularly monitored.
- Promote positive relationships: Children are encouraged and taught to develop positive relationships with one another and with staff through play-based activities, pair/group learning, integration, leisure time, etc.
- S.P.H.E. curriculum: Resilience skills and emotional awareness is taught through the S.P.H.E. curriculum. Teachers may employ differentiated strategies, e.g. social stories, sorting and matching tasks, visual communication systems.

- Note: Child protection concerns should be reported to the DLP or DDLP, as per school policy.

### **Staff Wellbeing**

It is acknowledged that the Síológa class can often be a high-energy, busy environment for staff that work there. The following supports are in place to safeguard and foster staff wellbeing:

- Team meetings: Staff are encouraged to check in with one another informally at the end of each day to discuss the day, to complete observational notes and to plan for the following day. More formal planning meetings should take place as part of Croke Park hours.
- Breaks from the classroom: If a staff member is hurt or injured in the classroom, he or she should take a break from the class for a few minutes to go for a short walk, get a cup of tea or speak to the principal. Staff can call the principal to ask for cover.
- Counselling and external supports: If staff would like to speak to someone external to the school, the Board of Management recommends calling Spectrum Life, a free and confidential over-the-phone counselling service for teachers and SNAs. **Freephone Helpline 1800 411 057 or text 'Hi' to 087 369 0010 to avail of Employee Assistant Services (EAS) support on SMS & WhatsApp.**

### **July Provision**

School-Based July Provision Programme is not currently provided in our school. Parents are entitled to apply for Home-Based July Provisions through the Department of Education and Skills (DES). Parents must find a suitable teacher to carry out the programme with their child and complete the application forms which are available to download from the DES website at <https://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Services/July-Provision/>

### **Summary**

This policy for ASD class has communicated St. Multose National School's procedures, guidelines, and approaches to the following:

- Promoting the use of positive language.
- Outlining the key roles and responsibilities of the Principal, Síológa class teacher, mainstream teacher, and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)
- Outlining guidelines to help children transitioning to the Síológa class
- Explaining approaches to integration and inclusion for the children in the Special Class.
- Describing approaches to teaching, learning and assessment.
- Encouraging participation in ASD specific Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in order to enrich teaching in the Special Classes.

- Explaining the role of outside agencies.
- Outlining the equipment, material and resources used within the Special Classes.
- Establishing the link between this policy and other school policies.
- Describing management of behaviour specific to pupils in Síológa
- Outlining well-being supports available to pupils and staff in Síológa
- July Provision

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021 in advance of our Síológa Class opening in September 2021. It will be reviewed and amended, as necessary. The ASD coordinator will initiate and co-ordinate this review. The policy will be available to all staff and parents on our school website.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix A: Safety Plan/Emergency Response**

If **CHILD X** engages in extreme injurious behaviour as described below or injures another child/staff member: CONTACT PRINCIPAL OR SECRETARY IMMEDIATELY.

### **Extreme Self-Injurious Behaviour**

1. Attempts to injure himself If **CHILD X** causes harm to his own body whereby he cuts himself, bangs his head against the wall where he causes his skin to break / bites himself breaking the skin

### **Extreme Injurious Behaviour (to others)**

2. Attempts to injure / injures peer If **CHILD X** causes harm to the body of a peer e.g. bites a peer; throws an item at a peer - making contact; bruising or marking the skin of a peer; intentionally knocks a peer to the ground; picks up and throws a peer;
3. Attempts to injure / injures staff If **CHILD X** causes harm to the body of a staff member e.g. bites a staff member; throws an item at a staff member - making contact; bruising or marking the skin of staff member; knocking staff member to the ground; grabbing staff member by neck/headlock,

### **Role of Staff:**

- Staff member 1: Stay with **CHILD X**, remove any items that he is attempting to hurt himself/others with and/or administer First Aid if needed.
- Staff member 2: Phone School Office to notify parents, Ambulance/GP.
- Staff member 3: Remove other children from the classroom for their safety.

**If there are less than two SNAs Ring Emergency Bell IMMEDIATELY**