

Guidance on forming lists & offering places in autism classes

This guidance has been developed for schools with autism classes at primary and second-level, to demonstrate the mechanism for allocating places in classes while allowing for integration in the corresponding year group in the school.

Students enrolled in an autism class will be counted twice for allocation purposes, as a student in a mainstream class and a student in an autism class.

Students enrolled in autism classes should have a corresponding place in their year group to allow for integration, as outlined in the NCSE Guidelines:

'where there is capacity within the corresponding mainstream class to accommodate the integration of the pupil'.

Admissions Process

Section 63 of the Education Act 1998, as amended, states that schools must run an annual process which can open from 1 October of the preceding year for their intake groups; junior infants/first-year and autism classes. For example, the process can open from October 2024 for students applying for a place in September 2025.

The Annual Admissions Notice must be published one week prior to the application process and must remain open for at least three weeks. If a year group or class is oversubscribed, places should be offered, or students added to a waiting list, as per the criteria set out in the oversubscription section of the school's policy. Schools must maintain a waiting list for the duration of the school year and offer places if they become available.

To apply for a place in an autism class, a student must have a diagnosis of autism and a recommendation for a place in an autism class - no other criteria should be considered. To allow for integration a place must be available in the corresponding mainstream class/year group.

The number of places available in an autism class may change after a school publishes its annual admissions notice due to places becoming available, or because a school opens a new class, and this should be noted on the admissions notice - see our updated template notice appended below and attached to the accompanying email.

If a school has provisional approval for an autism class that may open during the school year, they may wish to flag this in advance and accept *expressions of interest*, for notification of the timeline for applications. However, it should be clearly stated that submitting an expression of interest form confers no entitlement to a place in an autism class, or any priority in the admissions process.

As a school will receive an additional allocation of teachers and ANAs when opening an autism class, they should ideally fill all the places in the class. If a school has more than one autism class, schools might consider having a class that caters to students in the junior end of the school and one which caters to students in the senior end of the school.

Schools must compile separate waiting lists for their intake group (Junior Infants/ 1st year), autism classes and other year groups, and these lists remain in place for the school year.

Offering Places

Schools should state the total number of places available in their intake group and other year groups, but when allocating places, they should in the first instance, hold back the number of places available in their autism class.

Example for offering 1st year places:

- 120 places are available in 1st year, 6 places are available in the new autism class;
- In the first instance, school should only offer 114 places (120-6), reserving 6 places in case the top 6 applicants to the autism class are in 1st year;
- If only 2 of the top 6 applicants are in 1st year, and accept place, the school can now proceed to offer another 4 places to applicants on mainstream waiting list;
- The 1st year list will thus be 118 students in mainstream, and 2 students in autism class.

Most school policies will offer places in autism class to existing students as their first priority category – as the student is already in the school, they will already have a place in their corresponding year group.

The next priority most schools have is for siblings followed by anyone living in the school planning area (if applicable). These applications could be received by students from any year group.

Sample oversubscription section for autism classes;

b) Autism Class(es)

If our autism class(es) is/are oversubscribed the school will apply the following selection criteria to students. These will be applied in the order listed below to applications received within the timeline as set out in the school's annual admission notice for the autism class(es). The applicant student must have a diagnosis of autism and have been recommended for a place in an autism class.

Priority Category 1: *Applicant students already enrolled in the school.*

Priority Category 2: *Applicant students who are applying for a place in junior infants/first year and are siblings of children and enrolled in the school at the same time.*

Priority Category 3: *Applicant students applying for a place in junior infants/first year and living in the school planning area as defined by the Department of Education available [\[here\]](#).*

Priority Category 4: *Applicant students who are applying for a place in other year groups (SI to 6th class/2nd to 6th year) and are siblings of children and enrolled in the school at the same time and where there is a place available in the relevant year group.*

Priority Category 5: *Applicant students who are applying for a place in other year groups (SI to 6th class/2nd to 6th year) living in the school planning area as defined by*

the Department of Education available [\[here\]](#) and where there is a place available in the relevant year group.

Priority Category 6: Applicant students living outside the school planning area as defined by the Department of Education available [\[here\]](#) where there is a place available in the relevant year group.

In the event that there are two or more students tied for a place or places in any of the selection criteria categories above (the number of applicants exceeds the number of remaining places), places will be offered or added to a waiting list for the autism class(es) by way of a lottery of completed applications.

After the admissions process a list should be formed in line with the school's policy listing the corresponding year group, as per the example below:

Number	Name	Year group	Priority Category
1	Ann	2 nd year	1
2	Ben	1 st year	2
3	Chad	1 st year	3
4	David	5 th year	4
5	Eva	2 nd year	4
6	Fred	5 th year	5
7	Geetha	3 rd year	5

- If places are available in an autism class, it should be offered to the next person on the list where you have a place in the corresponding year group.
- If the next person on the list does not have a corresponding year group, they remain on the list and the next applicant with a corresponding year group is offered the place.

Worked Example:

Four places available in the autism class.

- One place offered to a student already in the school Ann;
- Two places offered to incoming first year students, Ben and Chad;
- There is no space in fifth year so David remains on the list;
- There is space in second year, so Eva is offered the place.
- David is now first on the list if another place becomes available.

After the places are offered the waiting list would look like this:

Number	Name	Year group	Priority Category
4	David	5 th year	4
6	Fred	5 th year	5
7	Geetha	3 rd year	5

Appendix 1

[SCHOOL NAME] ANNUAL ADMISSION NOTICE

in respect of admissions to the 20__/__ (*insert school year concerned*) school year

Admission Policy and Application Form

A copy of the school's **Admission Policy** and the **Application Form for Admission** for the [*insert school year*] is available as follows: –

To download at: [www.\[schoolwebsiteaddress\]](http://www.[schoolwebsiteaddress])

On request: By emailing [*school email address*] or writing to: [*school office address*]

Part 1 - Admissions to the 20__/__ [*insert school year concerned*] school year Application and Decision Dates for admission to the 20__/__ [*insert school year concerned*]

The following are the dates applicable for admission to junior infants/first year (delete as appropriate):

The school will commence accepting applications for admission on	
The school shall cease accepting applications for admission on	
The date by which applicants will be notified of the decision on their application is	
The period within which applicants must confirm acceptance of an offer of admission is*	

***Failure to accept an offer within the prescribed period above may result in the offer being withdrawn.**

Note: the school will consider and issue decisions on late applications in accordance with the school's Admission Policy.

Autism Class Application and Decision Dates for admission to the 20__/__ [*insert school year concerned*] school year

The following are the dates applicable for admission to the school's **autism** class which caters for children with [*insert details of category/categories of education needs approved by the Minister catered for in the class*]:

The school will commence accepting applications for admission to the autism class on	
The school shall cease accepting applications for admission to the autism class on	
The date by which applicants will be notified of the decision on their application for admission to the autism class is	
The period within which applicants must confirm acceptance of an offer of admission to the autism class is*	

***Failure to accept an offer within the prescribed period above may result in the offer being withdrawn.**

Number of places being made available in the 20__/__ [insert school year concerned] school year

The number of available places in junior infants/first year (delete as appropriate) ^	
The number of residential places is (boarding schools only)	
The number of non-residential places is (boarding schools only)	
The number of places being made available in the autism class catering for children with [insert category or categories of additional ('special') education catered for in the specialist class] ~	

Include the section below, as appropriate, if the school has a waiting list in place prior to 1 February 2020, and intends to prioritise admissions based on this list.

It should be deleted in all other instances.

Prior to the commencement of Section 62 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act, 2018 on 1 February 2020, [School Name] has compiled a waiting list and provided written confirmation to applicants that they are on this list. The total number of school places in junior infants/first year is _____. The number of applicants on the waiting list is _____. Waiting lists will cease in February 2025.

Other classes approved by the Minister

If the school has a number of specialised classes approved by the Minister that cater for different categories of additional education needs, details of the numbers of places for each specialised class must be provided.

PART 2 - Admissions to the [insert previous school year] school year

(This section should only be completed if your school intake group/special class was oversubscribed in the previous school year)

Information regarding the admission process for the Intake Group for [junior infants/ first year]/[autism class] for the 20__/__ school year

In respect of the 20__/__ [insert school year *prior to that to which the admission notice applies*] school year, the total number of applications for admission received by the school was_____.

Breakdown of places allocated for the 20__/__ school year:	
Number of places available	
Number of applications received	

<p>Number of offers made and accepted under each criteria</p>	<p>A description of each criterion used and the number of places offered and accepted under that criterion must be entered here. Example, as follows: Criterion One: Applicants living in the catchment area – 40 places offered, 38 places accepted. Criterion Two: Applicants with siblings attending the school – 20 places offered, 20 places accepted.</p>
<p>Total number of offers made</p>	
<p>Number of names placed on waiting list</p>	