



ASD CLASS POLICY

SALESIAN SECONDARY COLLEGE, PALLASKENRY

Introduction:

The ASD class, hereafter The Den, attempts to enable all students with ASD to belong to an educational community without prejudice and within which individual difference is celebrated and respected.

The Den reflects the inclusive ethos of Salesian Secondary College and wherever possible the students in The Den are integrated within the mainstream school.

Mission Statement:

Our school exists to provide a balanced and holistic education for each of our students. Our aim is to enable and empower students to acquire the self-confidence, academic qualifications, life skills and attitudes for leading satisfying lives which should contribute to the betterment of the church and society.

We regard ourselves as a Christian community where the values of the gospel find daily expression in our Catholic ethos and all our policies and practices as we nourish a spirituality of compassion, justice and forgiveness. We continue to promote and encourage the teachings of our founder Don Bosco to ensure a fair and satisfying education for all our students.

We invite the active involvement of parents and past pupils in such decision making as is relevant to their respective roles in this community. We consciously strive to facilitate the active involvement of the wider church and representatives of local organisations in the overall mission of our school.

Special Education Needs Mission Statement:

Salesian Secondary College endeavours to provide quality education for all students in a caring disciplined and respectful environment. We aim to prepare students for life and responsible citizenship and to motivate them towards the achievement of their full potential.

Rationale:

The purpose The Den is to assist students with ASD to leave school with the skills necessary to participate, to the best of their ability, in an inclusive way in society and to live independent and fulfilled lives.

This policy is ratified in order to give a context and direction to the work of all members of the school community, as it relates to the support of learners with ASD.

Development of The Den:

Aims and Objectives:

- To provide a whole school response to the needs of students with ASD within the overall ethos of the school.
- To provide a safe, nurturing and happy environment in which students are guided and supported.
- To provide a predictable and consistent environment where students' needs are implicitly understood and met.
- To facilitate every aspect of the student's education from his/her transfer from primary school to his transition to college/work upon completion of his/her education at Salesian Secondary College.
- To identify any difficulty that students with ASD are experiencing as early and as thoroughly as possible.
- To encourage parental co-operation and involvement and to keep parents/guardians regularly informed of progress.
- To work in partnership with parents/ guardians, students, the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) and other outside professionals.
- To set achievable and manageable targets for students attending The Den.
- To employ a variety of resources, equipment and teaching strategies to enable differentiation in the approach to the curriculum.
- To provide access to an extended curriculum whereby students are taught in the areas of social skills and life skills training and stress management strategies
- To attempt to meet the sensory needs of students in The Den by providing access to sensory and sensory integration rooms.
- To promote and encourage the integration of all students in The Den within the mainstream school.

Assessment:

An assessment includes an evaluation of the nature and extent of the student's ASD diagnosis and of the services which the student needs so as to be able to reach his/her potential and fully participate in and benefit from education.

It may also include:

- Screening tests in literacy and numeracy for all incoming first year students.
- Diagnostic and informal testing to clarify and identify the exact areas of strength and need.

*All testing is subject to the consent of parents/guardians.

*Definitive conclusions will not be drawn from these tests. They are, however, used as part of a multifaceted assessment involving:

(a) Information from primary schools - consultation with class teacher, learning support teacher/ resource teacher in the feeder primary schools.

(b) Consultation with parents/guardians.

(c) Consultation, where appropriate, with students with ASD.

(d) Feedback from subject teachers.

(e) Consultation with outside professionals that are involved with students with ASD.

*All procedures, test results and information received are documented and filed. In addition, relevant information in relation to a student with ASD specific educational needs is brought to the attention of mainstream teachers.

Induction:

It is the objective of teachers in The Den and support staff to facilitate the successful transfer of students with ASD from their primary school to Salesian Secondary College. School personnel visit the students in their primary school and also meet with the students' class teacher and/or resource teacher. The student with ASD and their parents/guardians then visit The Den and receive a tour of the school prior to commencement of new school year.

Role of ASD class Teacher:

- To support the delivery of the mainstream curriculum in a way that meets the needs of students with ASD and to provide access to an extended curriculum, which will include; social skills training, life skills training, sensory programme, stress management strategies etc.
- Assessing and recording students' needs and progress.
- Devising individual visual timetables.
- Setting specific, time-related targets for each student.
- Direct teaching of the students on a one to one basis or group setting within The Den.
- Collaborating with class teachers in regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, suitable textbooks, use of I.T. and a range of other related matters.

- Monitoring and managing student's behaviour and progress.
- Meeting with relevant professionals, in the student's interest such as psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists etc.
- Co-ordination of timetable and programme for SNAs.
- Organising and facilitating a range of structured lunchtime activities.
- Weekly Progress Meeting with SNAs.
- Meeting and regular communication with parents/guardians.

Consultation with Mainstream Teachers:

Communication of relevant information between teachers in The Den and mainstream teachers is on-going.

General guidelines for the teaching of students with ASD are given to teachers who teach a student with ASD (See Appendix 3). Also, the SNAs establish a contact with each of their students' teachers and frequently check progress with them.

Mainstream teachers have the facility to request that a student return to The Den at any time.

Management are kept informed of the progress/problems for each student through regular consultation with teachers from The Den.

Role of Parent(s) and/or Guardian(s):

Partnership with parents/guardians plays a crucial role in enabling students who attend The Den to achieve their potential. Parents/guardians are regarded as the primary educators of their child and their input and involvement at every stage of their child's education is encouraged and valued.

Communication with parents/guardians is on-going. This is done through the home school journal and/or text messaging/phone calls. Meetings with parents/guardians are held at least twice yearly to review progress and plan future targets. Parents/guardians are encouraged to support the school in working with their child with ASD.

Role of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA):

- Give general assistance to the mainstream teacher and teachers from The Den, under the direction of the Principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature.
- Attend weekly meeting with teachers from The Den to discuss progress of student(s).
- Duties shall be modified to support the particular needs of each student concerned.

Individual Education Plan (IEP):

An Individual Education Plan is prepared for every student who attends The Den.

Contents of an Individual Education Plan include;

1. The nature and degree of the student's special educational needs.
2. The nature and degree of the student's abilities, skills and talents.
3. The special education provision provided to the student.
4. The present level of educational performance of the student.
5. The targets for the student, in which achievement will be attempted, will take place over a period not exceeding 12 months.

A copy of the IEP is given to and signed by the parents/guardians. It will be available upon request to the SENO and other relevant professionals.

Parents/ guardians may appeal against:

- Any statement or description of their child's special education needs that they consider incorrect or inadequate to meet their child's needs.
- The failure of the school or Department of Education and Skills to implement any part of the plan.

Curriculum and Integration:

All students attending The Den in Salesian Secondary College attend mainstream classes in so far as possible. The Den will provide the relevant supports for students with ASDs to enable them to integrate into the mainstream classes, so as they can be taught alongside their peers with the majority of their learning taking place there.

During time in The Den, students have access to an extended curriculum (either individually or in a small group setting) where they will receive social and life skills training, a sensory programme and stress management strategies. Students will also benefit from pre and/or post tutoring of mainstream subjects.

The Individualised Timetable:

Students in The Den operate from a modified timetable. The number of academic subjects undertaken is wholly dependent on their needs and abilities. Activities in The Den are also individualised. Each student's timetable is constantly under review and changes can be made throughout the academic year.

Catering for Unstructured Times:

Students in The Den are provided with structured lunchtime activities, which are supervised.

The majority of these activities are open to students in 1st and 2nd year thereby enabling students in The Den to socialise and get to know their peers in a structured, yet informal setting.

Examinations:

Reasonable accommodations have been put in place in an effort to negate the stress that is associated with class tests and examinations for students with ASD.

Mainstream teachers are asked to give adequate notice of all class tests. Students in The Den, where possible, have the option of completing class tests within The Den with a teacher or SNA. Students are given extra time, if required, to complete exams and may also be provided with appropriate reasonable accommodations if deemed necessary by the State Examinations Commission.

This process is continued up to and including the Junior Certificate Examination (and beyond if necessary) where reasonable accommodations, if deemed necessary, are made for students with ASD in consultation with students/ parents/mainstream teachers.

Safeguarding Children:

Salesian Secondary College's Child Safeguarding Statement and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 underpin our approach to safeguarding children.

Students with ASD can be particularly vulnerable to bullying and social exclusion and may find understanding social norms and initiating and maintaining friendships challenging. Contributing factors include difficulties with verbal and non-verbal communication, narrow interests and rigid behaviours, sensory sensitivities and reduced social skills relative to their peers.

School personnel play a vital role in protecting children from abuse. They have regular contact with students so are in a strong position to identify signs of abuse and neglect.

We aim to:

- Create safe environments for students through robust safeguarding practices.
- Build resilience, amongst our students, through the utilisation of Salesian Secondary College's Pastoral Care Policy.
- Ensure that adults who work in the school, including volunteers, do not pose a risk to children.
- Ensure staff are trained, know how to respond to concerns and keep-up-to-date with policy and practice.
- Teach students about staying safe.

- Maintain an environment where students feel confident to approach any member of staff if they have a worry or problem.

Support Services and Links to Outside Agencies:

The Den in Salesian Secondary College has established links with the following agencies:

- Limerick Youth Service
- Irish Autism Action (IAA)
- Limerick SENCO Forum
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- Special Education Support Service (SESS)
- Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO)
- National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS)
- Occupational Therapy (OT), Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) and Psychology Services in Health Service Executive (HSE).

Legislation:

The school authorities are committed to complying with the following legislation and guidelines:

- The Education Act 1998
- The Education Welfare Act 2000
- The Equal Status Act 2000
- The Comhairle Act 2000
- The Education for Persons with Special Education (EPSEN) Act 2004
- The Disability Act 2005
- The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process 2006
- The National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NCCA) Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities 2007
- Department of Education and Science Guidelines on Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs- Post Primary 2007
- National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011
- Child and Family Agency Act 2013
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017

Evaluation:

School management will accept feedback from staff, students and parents made through the proper use of the appropriate channels ie staff meetings, student committees and PSAC. This feedback will inform periodic evaluation of the policy by Management.

This policy is incorporated into the body of School Policy from the date of ratification.

Implementation Date:

This policy takes effect from date of ratification. Amendments will be implemented immediately.

Ratification and Communication:

The amended policy will be communicated to members of the Board of Management (BOM) prior to the meeting of the BOM on _____. Parents will be made aware in the next school communication that the policy is available for viewing by appointment in the school.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson



Appendix 1

Admission to The Den

The special class for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has been developed with the co-operation and support of the NCSE and DES. The class will cater for and can accommodate a maximum of 6 students who have a diagnosis of ASD.

- DES policy dictates that all ability levels should be catered for within The Den. The Board of Management supports such a policy unless the nature and degree of the needs of the student are such that to enrol the student concerned would be inconsistent with both the best interests of the student concerned and the effective provision of education for other students with whom the student concerned is to be educated. Students with severe behavioural difficulties will not be enrolled.
- Parents who wish to enrol their child into first year should make contact with the Principal prior to the commencement of the academic year when the child is in 6th class in primary school. Applications for the class must be returned to the office on or before the closing date for first year applications. The school is obliged to make it clear that no late applications can be considered for the class particularly when places for first year are oversubscribed.
- Parents must attend an interview with the Principal and provide all relevant documents pertaining to their child's diagnosis and to their previous schooling/ education. The diagnosis must be in accordance with the DSM IV, DSM V or ICD 10 for resourcing and documentation must also have a recommendation for a 'special class placement' (NCSE requirements)
- Where a report outlining the student's care or educational needs is deemed inadequate or out of date, the Principal/Board of Management may insist that the family obtain an up to date educational and/or psychological report.
- As places within The Den are limited (total of 6), the school shall run a lottery to determine the order in which places can be filled if there are more qualified applicants than places available.
- Participation in The Den will be subject to ongoing review.
- Transfer from other second level schools to The Den will be in line with the requirements of Salesian College admissions policy and applicants also satisfying the criteria for The Den.
- A decision to enrol a student in The Den will be made by the Board of Management and this decision is final.
- Students who are enrolled in this class will follow the normal course through school: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th year.

Appendix 2

Autistic Spectrum Disorders

“Autism is not me. Autism is just an information processing problem that controls who I am.”

Donna Williams, author of *Nobody, Nowhere & Somebody, Somewhere* Jessica Kingsley: London (1998)

Students with ASD are described as sharing a triad of impairments that affects their ability to understand and use non-verbal and verbal communication, understand social behaviour – which affects their ability to interact with other students and adults – and think and behave flexibly, which may be shown in restricted, obsessional or repetitive activities. This triad may be described as a tripartite cluster of specific abnormal patterns of social, communicative and thought behaviours. It has been suggested that an additional dimension related to difficulties in processing sensory information might also be added to the triad.

Impairments in communication refer to verbal and non-verbal communication. Verbal difficulties may include a delay in the development of language, comprehension difficulties, literalness, poorly modulated intonation and delivery of speech, echolalia (echoing speech), unusual vocabulary and repetitive use of language.

Non-verbal difficulties include difficulty in empathising with others and in appropriately interpreting social cues, body language and facial expressions. Gestures are often stiff, stilted or overexaggerated.

Students demonstrate a lack of flexibility of thinking and behaviour and one may notice poor social imagination, resistance to change, restricted and/or repetitive activities and routines, and an obsessional and narrow range of interests.

Symbolic play and joint attention skills are also impaired in students with ASD. A lack of ‘shared attention’ or difficulty participating in the activities or enjoyment of others has been highlighted as a particular challenge to teachers as it affects the student’s ability to share interests, have varied interests, adapt behaviour according to the situation, accept changes in rules and routines, engage in imaginative play with others, accept others’ points of view and generalise learning.

Furthermore, students with ASD may engage in hand flapping, rocking or spinning; demonstrate heightened sensitivity to noise, smell, taste, touch or visual stimuli; experience erratic sleep patterns; display unusual eating habits; engage in self-injurious or aggressive or hyperactive behaviour; exhibit an unusual posture or gait and possess irrational fears or phobias.

Since the 1980s, the idea has emerged of a spectrum which acknowledges the impact of both the range of general learning disability and level of ASD for the student’s learning and teaching programmes.

Appendix 3

Asperger's Syndrome

“There is no right type of Asperger’s. People with Asperger’s are as varied as Norwegians and trombone players.”

Mark Haddon, author of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Vintage: London (2004)

Asperger’s syndrome is thought to fall within the spectrum of autism, but with enough distinct features to warrant its own label. It is characterised by subtle impairments in three areas of development: social communication, social interaction and social imagination. There is no clinically significant delay in cognitive development or in language acquisition. However, students with Asperger’s syndrome have communication difficulties and may speak in a monotonous or exaggerated tone and at great length about a topic that is of particular interest to them irrespective of the reaction of the listener. Students find it difficult to interpret social signals and interact with others. They often excel at memorising facts and figures but exhibit difficulty thinking in the abstract ways required for subjects such as English and Religious Education.

Students may have additional motor co-ordination and organisational problems such as a tendency to compartmentalise thinking (e.g. completion of a task may be perceived as unrelated to the presentation of the task), difficulties in managing time and completing work, eating, drinking and sleeping irregularities, an inability to block out distractions affecting attention span, inappropriate eye contact, and sensory and perceptual sensitivities. Asperger’s syndrome affects students in the average to above average ability range.

Appendix 4
Students with ASD
Tips for Learning and Teaching for Mainstream Teachers

Impairments in Social Interaction

- Students with ASDs are literal thinkers.
- Students are confused by the rules that govern social behaviour.
- Students require direct teaching in social skills.
- Be aware of the difficulties for students inherent in less structured situations such as break, lunchtime, in the corridor and in transitions between lessons.
- Develop a 'Buddy system' with mainstream peers.

Impairments in Language and Communication

- Students require support in understanding the purpose and value of communication.
- Attention needs to be directed to teaching social aspects of language such as turn taking and timing.
- Use visual material and/or signing to support and facilitate students' communicative initiations and responses.
- Provide precise instructions for students to follow.
- Always refer to the student by name as he/she may not realise that 'everyone' includes them.
- Do not expect eye contact and never turn the student's face towards you.
- Keep verbal instructions brief and simple.

Impairments in Imagination with a Restricted Range of Behaviours, Activities and Interests

- Students must be helped to cope with new and/or varying activities.
- Pre-empt the student's anxiety that results from being presented with unstructured or unfamiliar situations without prior warning/explanation.

Additional Tips for Learning and Teaching

- Adjustments may need to be made to the classroom to address the student's undersensitivity/oversensitivity to noise, smell, taste, light, touch or movement.
- Structure the classroom environment to reduce distractions.
- Secure student's attention prior to issuing instructions/engaging in conversation.
- Provide structures that assist students in understanding the duration of tasks.
- Make the links between different tasks clear to students.
- Use computers to support the student's learning and teaching opportunities.
- Disapprove of inappropriate behaviour and not of the student.

*This information is from the Special Education Support Service Website (sess.ie)

*Further detailed information available from *Autistic Spectrum Disorders: A Guide to Classroom Practice*, Autism Working Group (2003) Belfast: Department of Education, Northern Ireland (in March 2004 SESS issued of this booklet, alternatively this booklet can be downloaded from sess.ie



Appendix 5

Individual Education Plan

Name:	
Address:	
Date of Birth:	
Parents:	
Previous School:	
Current School:	
Principal:	Year Head:
ASD class Teacher:	Class:
Psychologist:	
Personnel involved in devising IEP:	
IEP Co-ordinator:	
Commencement date of IEP:	
Review Date:	
Special Education Provision:	

Present Level of Educational Performance: Outside Agency.

Date	Chronological Age	Name of Test	Administrator	Outcome

Present Level of Educational Performance: School Based.

Date	Chronological Age	Name of Test	Administrator	Outcome

Informal Observations: Observations from student, parents, teachers and SNA.
Social Communication Skills:
Self Management Skills:
Ability to keep to Class Rules and Routines:
Literacy Skills:
Mathematical Skills:
Access to Curriculum:
Learning Styles and Interests:
Attendance:
Behaviour:
Abilities/Skills/Talents:

Priority Learning Needs:

Targets	Resources/Techniques/Methods	Outcome

Accommodations Required:

Signature of Parent(s) _____

Signature of Teacher _____



Appendix 6

**THE DEN
WEEKLY PROGRESS REPORT**

Student Name:

Date:

Academic:

Behaviour:

Social: