

# **ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School Admission Policy**

Ratified by Board of Management – January 15<sup>th</sup> 2025  
Policy Review – January 2027

# Admission Policy of ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School

## 1. Introduction

This Admission Policy complies with the requirements of the Education Act 1998, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 the Equal Status Act 2000, the Disabilities Act 2005, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and the Rules for National Schools as updated by relevant DES circulars. In drafting this policy, the board of management of the school has consulted with school staff, the school patron and with parents of children attending the school.

The policy is approved by the school patron. It is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy, on request, to any person who requests it.

The relevant dates and timelines for the ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School admission process are set out in the school's annual admission notice, which is published on the school's website at least one week before the commencement of the admission process for the school year concerned.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the annual admission notice for the school year concerned.

The application form for admission is published on the school's website and is available to download.

ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School, under the patronage of Autism Ireland, is a Special School funded by the Department of Education (DE) for Autistic students with co-occurring complex needs. The school welcomes any referrals for enrolment to the school for any student aged between 4 and 18 years of age who has a confirmed primary diagnosis of autism or has a single diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum (as per DSM-V or ICD-10 criteria by a certified clinical/educational psychologist)<sup>1</sup>; as well as a recommendation for ASD-specific education in a specialised setting by a clinical/educational psychologist. Those referrals will be considered for enrolment in accordance with the policies and procedures more fully defined below.

## 2. Characteristic Spirit and General Information

Our mission statement states:

*Our mission is to create opportunities through education, in an environment that is caring, supportive and joyful, improving the lives of Autistic children and young adults and the lives of their families. To this end, we value:*

- *Student-centred education that celebrates each child's uniqueness*
- *Early intervention and assessment*
- *Individualised, evidence-based education*
- *Partnership with families*
- *Participation in Society*

ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School offers a child-centred autism-specific education, which draws on a range of evidence-based practices, frameworks and communication methodologies (Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA), Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children

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<sup>1</sup> Assessment and classification of autism or autistic spectrum disorder by a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist using DSM-V or ICD-10 criteria OR multi-disciplinary assessment of same by a professional team [including a clinical psychologist/ educational psychologist].

(TEACCH), Visual Supports, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), Natural Environment Teaching (NET) Positive Behaviour Support (PBS), Task Analysis (TA), Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA) Functional Communication Training (FCT) Sensory Integration (SI) etc, in line with the Department of Education policy. Students have access to a broad, balanced, relevant and developmental range of curricular experiences in each curricular area as set out in *the National Curriculum*. Educational plans are designed to meet each child's individual needs and facilitate the development of each child's unique potential.

We aim to develop skills for success in the home, school and the wider community. Ensuring that our students are enabled to communicate their needs, will, preferences and emotions. Support in learning life skills for independent living and self-care is also a huge focus in our school. ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School depends on the grants and teacher resources provided by the DE. It also operates within the regulations laid down by the DE. ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School has regard for the resources and funding available to meet the individual needs of students and the number of children per class. Children are enrolled in classes according to their age, strengths and developmental needs.

### **Current school population**

Presently, the school caters for 54 children across nine classrooms and has a staff comprised of the Principal, Deputy Principal, 2 AP2 Post holders, a Behaviour Analyst, 9 Teachers, 39 SNAs, and an Office Administrator. The Health Service Executive (HSE), via the Children Disability Network Teams (CDNT), provide occupational therapy services and speech and language support services and a psychological service, on a limited needs-based basis. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) also provides a limited service to the school. Behavioural support services are offered from within the school community.

### **3. Admission Statement**

ABACAS Special School will not discriminate in its admission of a student to the school on any of the following:

- (a) the gender ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (b) the civil status ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (c) the family status ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (d) the sexual orientation ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (e) the religion ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (f) the disability ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (g) the ground of race of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (h) the Traveller community ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned, or
- (i) the ground that the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned has special educational needs

As per section 61 (3) of the Education Act 1998, 'civil status ground', 'disability ground', 'discriminate', 'family status ground', 'gender ground', 'ground of race', 'religion ground' 'sexual orientation ground' and 'Traveller community ground' shall be construed in accordance with section 3 of the Equal Status Act 2000.

ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School will cooperate with the National Council for Special Education in the performance by the Council of its functions under the Education for Persons with Special

Educational Needs Act 2004 in relation to the provision of education to children with special educational needs, including in particular by the provision and operation of a special class or classes when requested to do so by the Council.

ABACAS Kilbarrack will comply with any direction served on the patron or the board, as the cases may be, under 37A and any direction served on the board under section 67(4B) of the Education Act.

#### **4. Categories of Special Educational Needs catered for in the school**

ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School is a school which, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for Autistic children with co-occurring

#### **5. Admission of Students**

ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School shall admit each student seeking admission except where –

- a) the school is oversubscribed (Section Six)
- b) A parent/guardian of a student, when required by the principal in accordance with section 23(4) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, fails to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour of the school is acceptable to him or her and that he or she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student.
- c) The applicant does not have the specified category of special educational needs provided for by this school, i.e., Autism Spectrum Disorder, or Complex Needs.
- d) The applicant has not provided a recent documented and confirmed diagnosis of ASD and either a written recommendation from a certified psychologist for an ASD-specific education in a special school or a letter from the Principal of the special school the child is currently attending confirming that the child is a pupil at that school.

#### **Early Intervention Class**

Autistic children who wish to apply for a place in the Early Intervention Class must do so between **April 1st and 30th** in the year of entry. For example, if you wished for your child to start in September 2025, you would only apply in April 2025. The child **must be aged three years** old in the September they are starting. **They cannot be aged two years or four years at the time of enrolment.**

Places offered for the following school year will be prioritised in the following order:

1. Children with siblings attending ABACAS;
2. Proximity to the school<sup>1</sup>.

A place in the Early Intervention class does **not** guarantee a place in the main ABACAS school. A child may stay in the Early Intervention class for a maximum of **2 years**. At this time their families can apply for a place in the main special school or to alternative educational settings.

#### **Main School**

Before an application is made for a place in the main school, Parents should ensure that:

- Parents must have contacted the NCSE at [parentsnotify@ncse.ie](mailto:parentsnotify@ncse.ie) and obtained a letter from the SENO supporting their application to ABACAS special school Kilbarrack.

- The child will be at least 4 years of age on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> of September of the year in which they are applying to enrol.
- The child has a recent (within the last 2 years) documented and confirmed diagnosis of Autism Spectrum<sup>2</sup> and a recommendation for a Special School placement. If this recommendation is not written on the report an addendum from the diagnosing psychologist must be sourced and included in the application.
- The Enrolment Application Form is completed in full.
- All supporting documentation that ensures a complete overview of the child is attached to the application form, including (though not limited to) current preschool/school placement reports, home tuition reports, psychological reports, medical reports, speech and language reports, occupational therapy reports and /or behavioural support plans.
- The child is living within a reasonable distance of the school and travel time is within acceptable parameters between home and school facilities<sup>3</sup>

Applications for the main ABACAS school are accepted between **February 1<sup>st</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>** for the following September. All applications must be submitted by post to the school office by **3pm on 28<sup>th</sup> February**. Applications received after this date will be considered late applications and will be returned with advice to apply the following year. Enrolment Application Forms can be downloaded from the school website; [www.abacaskilbarrack.ie](http://www.abacaskilbarrack.ie)

All applications must include:

- i) a completed application form
- ii) written confirmation that the child has a diagnosis of Autism (within the last 2 years) and a recommendation for a Special School placement,
- iii) any other relevant documents including psychological reports, medical reports, speech and language reports, occupational therapy reports and/or behavioural support plans,
- iv) original Birth Cert,
- v) current pre-school/school placement reports (and home tuition reports, if relevant),
- vi) verification of address by way of original Utility Bill or other for all new families to school.<sup>4</sup>

Any application form not accompanied by the written confirmation of the diagnosis or other relevant documentation will be returned and only dealt with when the full documentation is presented. If the school does not receive the necessary documentation by the last day of February, the application will be returned to the applicant.

**No guarantee of a school place is given or implied by acceptance of an application form.**

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<sup>1</sup>Places will be allocated on the basis of proximity to school which will be determined by the shortest distance by public road between the school gates and the gates/road entrance to the child's home as measured on Google Maps.

<sup>2</sup> Assessment and classification of autism or autistic spectrum disorder by a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist using DSM-V or ICD-10 criteria OR multi-disciplinary assessment of same by a professional team [including a clinical psychologist.

<sup>3</sup> Reasonable distance will be defined in accordance with the DES transportation department and the normal special school transport scheme for pupils.

## **6. Oversubscription**

In the event that the school is oversubscribed, the school will, when deciding on applications for admission, apply the following selection criteria in the order listed below to those applications that are received within the timeline for receipt of applications as set out in the school's annual admission notice:

- 1) Younger siblings of students already attending ABACAS Kilbarrack (including step-siblings and foster children resident at the same address),
- 2) Students who finished our Early Intervention Programme in the term prior to the date of Entry,
- 3) Children living closest to the school.

In any year where the number of applications exceeds the number of places available, and where category 1 and 2 requirements have been upheld, priority will be given to a child who lives in the closest proximity to the school which will be determined by the shortest distance by public road between the school gates and the gates/road entrance to the child's home as measured on Google Maps. Applicants will be informed if there is a place available within **21 days** of the final application date. Application documentation will be returned to unsuccessful applicants with advice to re-apply the following year. Written offers of school places will be distributed to the applicant's Parents.

## **7. What will not be considered or taken into account**

In accordance with section 62(7)(e) of the Education Act, the school will not consider or take into account any of the following in deciding on applications for admission or when placing a student on a waiting list for admission to the school:

- a) a student's prior attendance at a preschool or preschool service;
- b) the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;
- c) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude; other than insofar as it is necessary in order to ascertain whether or not the student has the category of special educational needs concerned;
- d) the occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a student's parents/guardians;
- e) a requirement that a student, or his or her parents/guardians, attend an interview, open day or other meeting as a condition of admission;
- f) a student's connection to the school by virtue of a member of his or her family attending or having previously attended the school, except where the student has a sibling currently enrolled in the school;
- g) the date and time on which an application for admission was received by the school.

This is subject to the application being received at any time during the period specified for receiving applications set out in the Annual Admission Notice of the school for the school year concerned.

## **8. Decisions on applications**

All decisions on applications for admission to ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School will be based on the following:

- Our school's admission policy
- The school's annual admission notice (where applicable)
- The information provided by the applicant in the school's official application form received during the period specified in our annual admission notice for receiving applications

Selection criteria that are not included in our school admission policy will not be used to make a decision on an application for a place in our school.

### **9. Notifying Applicants of decisions**

Applicants will be informed in writing as to the decision of the school, within the timeline outlined in the annual admissions notice.

If a student is not offered a place in our school, the reasons why they were not offered a place will be communicated in writing to the applicant, including, where applicable, details of the student's ranking against the selection criteria and details of the student's place on the waiting list for the school year concerned.

Applicants will be informed of the right to seek a review/right of appeal of the school's decision (see Section 15 below for further details).

### **10. Acceptance of an offer of a place by an applicant**

Parents must respond in writing to accept the offer of a school placement within **16 days** of the school issuing confirmation. Failure to respond in writing by the specified date will result in their child's place being offered to another student. Parents cannot defer a place which has been offered to them. Parents who are unsuccessful in securing a place in ABACAS in any year can re-apply in the next school year.

In accepting an offer of admission from ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School, you must indicate—

- (i) whether or not you have accepted an offer of admission for another school or schools. If you have accepted such an offer, you must also provide details of the offer or offers concerned and
- (ii) whether or not you have applied for and awaiting confirmation of an offer of admission from another school or schools, and if so, you must provide details of the other school or schools concerned.

### **11. Circumstances in which offers may not be made or may be withdrawn**

An offer of admission may not be made or may be withdrawn by ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School where—

- (i) it is established that information contained in the application is false or misleading.
- (ii) an applicant fails to confirm acceptance of an offer of admission on or before the date set out in the annual admission notice of the school.
- (iii) the parent of a student, when required by the principal in accordance with section 23(4) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, fails to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour of the school is acceptable to him or her and that he or she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student; or
- (iv) an applicant has failed to comply with the requirements of 'acceptance of an offer' as set out in section 10 above.

## **12. Sharing of Data with other schools**

Applicants should be aware that section 66(6) of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 allows for the sharing of certain information between schools in order to facilitate the efficient admission of students.

## **13. Waiting list in the event of oversubscription**

In the event of there being more applications to the school year concerned than places available, a waiting list of students whose applications for admission to ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School were unsuccessful due to the school being oversubscribed will be compiled and will remain valid for the school year in which admission is being sought.

Placement on the waiting list of ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School is in the order of priority assigned to the students' applications after the school has applied the selection criteria in accordance with this admission policy.

Offers of any subsequent places that become available for and during the school year in relation to which admission is being sought will be made to those students on the waiting list, in accordance with the order of priority in relation to which the students have been placed on the list.

## **14. Late Applications**

All applications for admission received after the closing date as outlined in the annual admission notice will be considered and decided upon in accordance with our school's admissions policy, the Education Admissions to School Act 2018 and any regulations made under that Act.

## **15. Procedures for admission of students to other years and during the school year**

The procedures of the school in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the school to classes or years other than the school's intake group are as follows:

Because ABACAS Kilbarrack is a special school and does not have a regular yearly intake group like mainstream schools, the same procedures as outlined above apply to all admissions, regardless of the child's age and the class they wish to be admitted to.

The procedures of the school in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the school, after the commencement of the school year in which admission is sought, are as follows:

In the event that a place becomes available in one of our classes during the school year, the place will be offered to the next applicant on the oversubscription list as defined in Section 13 above.

**NOTE:** The numbered oversubscription list applies only to applications for the school year in question. A new list will be drawn up each year. Unsuccessful applicants are, therefore, required to reapply with the required documentation the following year if they are to be considered for admission.

## **16. Declaration of the non-charging of fees**

The board of ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School or any person acting on its behalf will not charge fees for or seek payment or contributions howsoever described as a condition of



1. An application for admission of a student to the school, or
2. The admission or continued enrolment of a student to the school.

## **17. Reviews/Appeals**

### **Review of decisions by the board of Management**

The student's parent or, in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18, the student, may request the board to review a decision to refuse admission. Such requests must be made in accordance with Section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

The timeline within which such a review must be requested and the other requirements applicable to such reviews are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998, which are published on the Department of Education and Skills' website. The board will conduct such reviews in accordance with the requirements of the procedures determined under Section 29B and with Section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

**Note:** Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to appealing to section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **may request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to appealing to section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

### **Right of appeal**

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, the parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may appeal a decision of this school to refuse admission.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(ii) of the Education Act 1998, where the refusal to admit was due to a reason other than the school being oversubscribed.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the board of management **prior to appealing to** section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

Appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 will be considered and determined by an independent appeals committee appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills.

The timeline within which such an appeal must be made and the other requirements applicable to such appeals are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998, which are published on the Department of Education website.

## **18. Code of Behaviour**

Parents of children enrolled in ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School, the members of the Board, staff members, external consultants and volunteers are required to cooperate and support the school's Code of Behaviour and all other policies and curricular organisation approved by the school's Board. The Board trusts that Parents will also work collaboratively with school staff as they assist the students themselves

in their effort to uphold the student Code of Behaviour. The Board also expects that Parents/Guardians of children seeking to enter the school demonstrate the same positive collaboration and support to the Staff and Board.

All parents/guardians of children who are being offered places will receive a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour. Parents/Guardians must read the Code of Behaviour and confirm in writing that it is acceptable to them.

### **19. Policy Review**

All parties agree that this enrolment policy will be reviewed each year to ensure that it is kept up to date and retains its relevance. Ongoing evaluation, new approaches to education, DES guidelines, and agreements may require this document to be modified from time to time.

**Signed:** John Dennehy  
John Dennehy, Chairperson  
Board of Management, ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School

**Signed:** Laura Kelly  
Laura Kelly, Principal, ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School

**Ratified by the Board of Management on: January 15<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**Next Review Period: January 2025**

# School Application Form

\*Please complete in block capitals with a black pen

Personal Information			
Surname			
First Name(s)			
Sex (Please Tick)	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
Date of Birth (DD/MM/YY)			
PPS No			
Home Address			
Nationality			
Language(s) Spoken (If applicable)			
Toileting (Please Tick)	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Family Information			
Parent/Guardian 1 Details:			
Name			
Relationship to child			
Occupation			
Mobile No.		Home No.	
Work No.		Email	
Parent/Guardian 2 Details:			
Name			
Relationship to child			
Occupation			
Mobile No.		Home No.	
Work No.		Email	
Has the applicant a sibling already attending Abacas Special School Kilbarrack?			
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name of Student			

Emergency Contact Details					
Relationship to Child					
Name					
Phone No					
Medical/Educational/Other					
Family Doctor (Name)					
Family Doctor (No.)					
Medical issues?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	
If yes, please provide more details					
Previous Education (School/Preschool/Home tuition etc. Please provide details of each if applicable)					
CDNT					
<b>Any additional factors concerning your child (medical/educational/social)?</b> Please outline below					
Documentation Enclosed					
<b>Important: Documents highlighted in bold and marked with an asterisk must be included with application.</b>					
Required Documentation <i>*Must be included with application</i>			Additional Documentation (optional)		
<b>Please Tick</b>	Yes	No	<b>Please Tick</b>	Yes	No
<b>*Copy of Birth Cert</b>			SLT Report		
<b>*Utility Bill</b>			OT Report		
<b>*Psych Report</b>			Other (please specify)		
Signed Declaration				Yes	No
I have enclosed the required documentation as listed above					
I have read and agree with the terms and conditions of the enrolment policy					
I am aware that submission of this form doesn't constitute an offer of a place					
Name of Parent Guardian (Print)					
Signature				Date	

**OFFICE USE ONLY**

<b>Issued:</b>	<b>Date Received:</b>	<b>Entry Year:</b>
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Should my child be placed on a waiting list for a place, I/We consent to the school sharing the details of my child with the National Council for Special Education for the purposes of planning for the provision of special education placements.

Yes  No