



ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School Admission Policy

Ratified by Board of Management – January 2023
Policy Review – January 2024



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 and 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 ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School admission process are set out in the school's annual admission notice which is published annually 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 and Skills (DES) for children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder and 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)¹; 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 children and young adults with autism and the lives of their families. To this end we value:

- *Student centred education that celebrates each child's uniqueness*
- *Early intervention and assessment*

¹ 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].



- *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 instructional principles and methodologies (Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA), Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH), Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Discrete Trial Training, etc), in line with the Department of Education (DES) policy. Students have access to a broad, balanced, relevant and developmental range of curricular experiences in each curricular area as set out in *The Primary School Curriculum (1999)*. Educational programmes are designed to meet each child's individual needs and facilitate the development of each child's unique potential.

Our aim is to develop skills for success in the home, school and the wider community. Training in the basic skills of communication, self-care and key social competencies form an integral part of the school programme at all levels. ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School depends on the grants and teacher resources provided by the DES. It also operates within the regulations laid down by the DES. 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 divided into classes according to their age, skill strengths and developmental needs.

Current school population

Presently, the school caters for 54 children across 9 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), St. Michael's House, Beechpark Services and Daughters of Charity provide occupational therapy services and speech and language support services and a psychological service, on a limited 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 children with Autism and complex needs.

5. Admission of Students

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

- a) the school is oversubscribed (please see [section 6](#) below for further details)
- 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 and 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

Children with a diagnosis of Autism, who wish to apply for a place in the Early Intervention Class must apply between **April 1st - 31st** in the year preceding entry. Children must be 3 years old on the date of entry.

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



1. Children with siblings attending ABACAS;
2. Proximity to the school¹.

If a child is not selected for the programme, families may re-apply the following year provided the child is within the age range.

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 but a child cannot be retained in the Early Intervention class beyond the school year in which they turn 5, as all children are legally required to be enrolled in formal education the year they turn 6.

Main School

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

- The child will be at least 4 years of age on or before the 1st 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 on the Autism Spectrum² 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 pre-school/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 facilities³

Applications for the main ABACAS school are accepted between **February 1st – 28th** for the next school year. All applications must be submitted by post to the school office by **3pm on 28th 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

All applications must include:

- i) a completed application form
- ii) written confirmation that the child has a diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum (within the last 2 years) and a recommendation for a Special School placement,

¹Places 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.

² 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.

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



- 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.⁴

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.

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 child who lives in 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 applicant 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:

Due to the fact that ABACAS Kilbarrack is a special school and does not have a regular yearly intake group as is the case in mainstream schools, the same procedures as outlined above apply to all admissions, regardless of the age of the child 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 parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, 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 website of the Department of Education and Skills. 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 making an appeal under 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 making an appeal under 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 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 making an appeal** under 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 website of the Department of Education and Skills.

18. Code of Behaviour

Parents of children enrolled in ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School, the members of the Board, staff members and external consultants and volunteers are required to co-operate 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.

A copy of the school's Code of Behaviour will be provided to all parents/guardians of children who are being offered places. Parent/Guardians must read the Code of Behaviour and confirm in writing that it is acceptable to them.

19. Policy Review



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

Signed: _____

John Dennehy, Chairperson
Board of Management, ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School

Signed: _____

Laura Kelly, Principal, ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School

Ratified by the Board of Management on: January 2023

Next Review Period: January 2024