



Naas Community
College

Naas Community College ASD Policy

Aims

Naas Community College (NCC) is committed to providing an education for all its students in a caring and supportive environment. NCC celebrates the uniqueness of each individual student and strives to ensure that all students, including those students with disabilities or special educational needs, reach their full potential in an inclusive environment. Furthermore, NCC aims to integrate all students socially and academically. This policy refers to Special Educational Need (SEN) as defined by the EPSEN Act (2004) as a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition. It is the policy of Naas Community College to refer to students as having 'additional needs' not SEN and the department that is responsible for such students is referred to as the Education Support Department. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Education Support Policy and the Education Assessment Policy.

Rationale

NCC caters for a wide range of abilities, interests and aptitudes. This involves careful assessment, planning and teaching of all students' needs. It is our policy to address all types of learning difficulties. We also are complying with the following legislation;

- The Education Welfare Act 2000
- Equal Status Act (2000 - 2018)
- The Education Act (1998)
- The Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004 (EPSEN)
- The Disabilities Act (2005)
- Child First Act (2015)
- Special Education Circular 0014/2017 and 0021/2022

Objectives

- Ensure that all students including those with special needs are supported so that they can achieve their full potential.
- Provide an environment in which pupils with special educational needs feel welcome and included and become fully integrated into the school.
- Adopt a whole school approach towards the educational and personal development of students with special educational needs.
- Adopt an environment of equality where diversity is respected.
- Comply with legislation.
- Adapt and differentiate the curriculum by teachers where necessary.
- Participation of Students with Additional Needs in the whole school experience.
- Provide training for teachers and SNAs.
- Involve parents in supporting their children's learning.
- Develop positive self esteem and positive attitudes towards school and the learning environment for all students.
- Set targets to improve the academic achievement of all students.

Overview of NCC Autism Unit:

Our Autism Unit is called Hazel. It consists of two sanctioned special classes; Hazel 1 and Hazel 2 and Hazel 3. All students have a primary diagnosis of Autism.

There are 6 students assigned to each class. Each class has an allocation of 1.5 teachers and two special needs assistants.

Hazel caters for the students from 08.30am to 3.30 pm Monday to Thursday and 08.30am to 12.54 pm on Friday.

Students have access to a locker, individual workstation and a shared desk in the classroom. Each student is provided with a visual schedule and timetable at their workstation. Students from Hazel can also opt to have a mainstream locker.

Individual timetables and schedules will be used to support the student at their unique level. Students accessing Hazel may have a reduced curriculum depending on their needs and the needs of the other students enrolled in the class.

The classes aim to support students to develop social skills, life skills and academic skills. Reduced curricular timetables are required in order to facilitate the development of life and social skills and to allow the students to manage their needs with regards to emotional regulation, stress and anxiety. Considerable time may be required for stimming and for transitions between activities. Also, the timetable must remain flexible, as is best practice, in order to manage unforeseen issues arising.

All students enrolled in the Hazel are students of NCC and should be treated as such in the spirit of the Special Education Act. Efforts to include Hazel students in mainstream activity should be made when; it is deemed appropriate and is of benefit to the specific student, where it is practicable and manageable from a health and safety perspective and a teaching and learning perspective.

We are mindful that NCC is an inclusive educational environment and we will seek out every available opportunity for our Hazel students to be involved in whole school events and activities. That said, no Hazel student should be put under undue pressure and anxiety to participate in any activity within the school.

As students enrolled in the Hazel are simultaneously students of NCC they are subject to the school's code of behaviour and other relevant expectations outlined in the school plan. While there is an expectation that all students adhere to the school code of behaviour special consideration should be given to the students enrolled in the ASD class. These considerations should be identified in the student support file following consultation with the ASD Coordinator, Education Support Coordinator, class teachers, school management and parents. Behaviour that is deemed to put the health and safety of students and/or staff at risk may be subject to the normal school sanctions outlined in the code of behaviour.

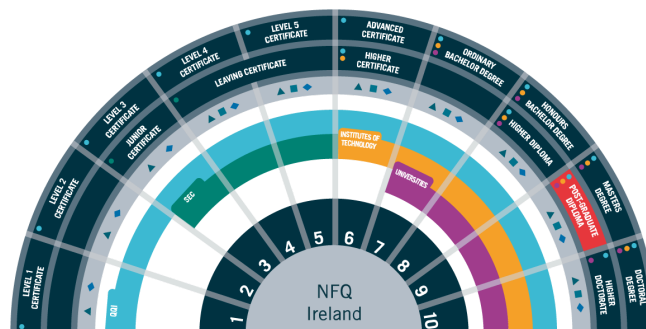
As such, any disciplinary actions that the school management deem appropriate can be carried out in the management of Hazel students as they would to any other student.

Teachers and SNAs are encouraged to undergo continuous professional development in their subject area in relation to Autism and other additional needs. Other teachers timetabled will be encouraged to do the same wherever that is possible.

Level 2 Learning Programmes:

The Level 2 learning programmes (L2LP) was developed for students with special education needs who are unable to access the Level 3 Junior Cycle programme. The Level 2 Learning

Programmes have been designed for students with a high moderate to low mild general learning disability. This programme provides meaningful learning and experiences for students who have a range of special educational needs. The level 2 learning programme may be taken in conjunction with some level 3 Junior Cycle subjects. The L2LP programme may be undertaken for a period of four years with state certification of achievement provided at the end of the programme. The programme is set in the context of the principles, the 5 key skills (Communication and Language, Living in the Community, Numeracy, Personal Care and Preparing for Work) and 24 statements of learning that frame the new Junior Cycle. For those students completing the Level 2 programme it is the responsibility of all teachers to plan and assess those students. Please see guidelines on www.jct.ie



Roles and responsibilities:

ASD Coordinator:

The ASD Coordinator will act as tutor for the students enrolled in the Hazel classes. They have responsibility for timetabling and L2LP programme development. They will work collaboratively with teachers timetabled to teach in Hazel classes and with mainstream teachers. They will work with the Education Support Coordinator to assign SNA timetables and duties.

The ASD Coordinator will be assigned to Hazel and will liaise with parents, other teachers, outside support professionals such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists and any other relevant professionals and agencies. The ASD Coordinator has responsibility for devising and implementing the student support files, designing timetables and informing the teachers timetabled in the Hazel class of best practice approaches to teaching and learning for students with a diagnosis of Autism and their co-occurring needs. They will also inform other teachers of issues arising with particular students, lead the four

SNAs assigned to their class and brief them on the care needs of individual students and give them instruction to carry out the care should it be required. Often, Health Care Plans and Behavioural Support Plans may have to be devised by the ASD Coordinator in order to assist other staff with the provision of care and the behavioural management of challenging students.

Teachers timetabled in the Autism class:

Following consultation with ASD and Education Support Coordinator, curricula teachers will prepare a scheme of work for the students timetabled for the Autism class. Each scheme needs to be differentiated to cater for all the needs of the students. It is the responsibility of each teacher to prepare appropriate work for their timetabled class.

Special Needs Assistants (SNA):

Each of the ASD classes has an allocation of 2 SNAs. These are shared amongst the 6 students in each room and are not assigned to one particular student. Where a student is attending mainstream classes, the SNA may be used to support note taking, recording homework and general classroom management although availability of SNA support in all mainstream classes will not always be possible.

It is important that the SNA takes an active interest in the welfare of the student and their social development. People with high energy and enthusiasm should be sought where possible. Also, SNAs need to feel valued, respected and listened to. The ASD Coordinator and Education Support Coordinator has a responsibility to treat the SNA fairly, involve them where possible and keep them informed.

SNAs provide schools with additional adult support staff who can assist children with special educational needs who also have additional and significant care needs. Such support is provided in order to facilitate the attendance of those pupils at school and also to minimise disruption to class or teaching time for the pupils concerned, or for their peers, and with a view to developing their independent living skills.

As per Circular 0030/2014 the purpose of the SNA scheme is to provide for the significant additional care needs which some pupils with special educational needs may have. The care need is identified by the teacher and included in planning. That said, it is the responsibility of the SNA to follow the instruction from the teacher in carrying out the care and educational needs (as recognised by the teacher) that the teacher recognises in real time. For students

with Autism activities such as playing, walking, stimming and others may be considered care needs.

Special Needs Assistants must:

Carry out duties as assigned by the Principal, in consultation with the S.E.N. in accordance with Circular 0030/2014.

- Work closely with subject teachers to ensure that students fully participate in the day-to-day life of the school. (SNAs support teachers in a non-teaching capacity. SNAs may not act as substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstance may they be left in sole charge of class).
- Be fully aware of the needs of their student(s) and work with the student in the classroom
- Inform Management, Education Support Co-ordinator or ASD Co-ordinator of any observations or concerns.
- Attend both staff and departmental meetings when appropriate.
- Help the student to complete tasks assigned by the teacher .
- Supervise and support students with additional needs at break times, before and after school
- Assist /escort students on school trips.
- Provide feedback on the progress of students with additional needs to the relevant subject teachers, tutors and the Education Support Co-ordinator or the ASD Co-ordinator.
- Assist students with additional needs to access in house and state examinations.
- Be flexible. SNAs may be assigned work (as per circular letter) in addition to or instead of their normal duties as determined by the Principal.

SNAs address the relevant care needs of the students in their care by:

- Helping them to mix with peers
- Supervising them when taking medication. e.g Diabetes
- Administering medicine
- Assisting with clothing, feeding, personal care
- Assisting with mobility needs
- Preparation of classroom or work area
- Assistance with Transport
- Assistance with out of school visits/ outdoor activities
- Assisting with social & communication difficulties
- Assisting with students' physical or sensory needs. e.g. need help swimming
- Supporting Student Support file development

- Assisting when student is a danger to himself or others
- Assisting at assembly, dispersal times or breaks

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) should:

- Submit all relevant documentation for accessing support i.e. any psychological reports, OT reports, Speech & Language Reports etc
- Sign Parental Permission form for accessing resources such as learning support, Assistive Technology, SNA etc as required.
- Encourage and support the child with additional needs to maximise the benefit of the support for the student.
- Maintain contact with the ASD Co-ordinator.
- Familiarise themselves with the arrangements in school that exist to support their child with additional needs.

Parents / Guardians may access a professional assessment of a student privately where such an assessment cannot be organised by the school.

Parents can prepare for and support the work of the school by participating with their child in such activities as:

- Supporting learning in English and / or Mathematics
- Book sharing / reading stories/ Paired reading (listening to and giving supportive feedback on oral reading)
- Discussions about school and other activities to build vocabulary and thinking skills
- Implementing suggested home-based activities outlined in their child's Student Support File and discussing the outcomes with the child's teachers.
- Talking positively about school and school work

Parents should keep the subject teacher informed of the progress that they observe in their child's learning. They should also let the school know of any learning difficulties that they observe in their child at home.

Students must:

- Complete homework set
- Participate in all appropriate assessment activities
- Participate actively and willingly in all support classes.

Supporting those on the spectrum.

Autism is a neurological disorder that is characterised by difficulties with social communication, with social interaction, and with social imagination and flexible thinking. An additional impairment, related to processing sensory information, has been suggested as a further dimension of ASD.

Social Communication

Atypical patterns of social communication can be verbal and non-verbal. Verbal difficulties may include a delay in the development of language, comprehension difficulties, literal thinking and speech, 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 over-exaggerated. Strategies for 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 (some turn taking activities may include board games, hitting a balloon back and forth, telephone conversations, bouncing a ball back and forth, etc).
- Directly teach gestures, facial expressions, emotions, vocal intonation and body language.
- 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. Social Interaction Problems with social behaviour will sometimes arise from communication and restrictive behaviours - for example, difficulties in interpreting facial expression. Also, as pupils with ASD tend to be literal thinkers, they will have problems with knowing the rules that govern social behaviour.

The following may help when dealing with Impairments in Social Interaction in a classroom setting:

- Students with Autism can be literal thinkers.
- Students are confused by the rules that govern social behaviour.
- Students require direct teaching in social skills.
- It may be necessary to structure opportunities for students to use social skills in different situations.
- Be aware of the difficulties for students inherent in less structured situations such as break, lunchtime, in the corridor and in transitions between lessons.
- Use stories to teach social communication/interaction (If required)
- Develop a 'Buddy system' with mainstream peers (Prefects).
- Directly teach jokes, puns and metaphors.

Social Imagination and Flexible thinking

In relation to a lack of flexibility of thinking and behaviour, one may notice that the child has limited social imagination, becomes anxious with changes in routine, prefers restricted and/or repetitive activities and routines, and is obsessional with a narrow range of interests. These difficulties can also be reflected in problems with imaginative play and with sharing the attention with others. Therefore, difficulty with participating in the activities or enjoyment of others is a particular challenge to teachers as it affects the student's ability to share and have varied interests, adapt behaviour according to the situation, accept changes in rules and routines, accept others' points of view, and generalise learning.

Strategies for 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.
- Devise and implement a structured play/leisure programme.

The combination of these three features may result in a range of further behavioural difficulties. Students with ASDs, for example, may engage in hand flapping, rocking or spinning. They may demonstrate heightened sensitivities to noise, smell, taste, touch or visual stimuli. They may also experience erratic sleep patterns, display unusual eating habits, engage in self-injurious, aggressive or hyperactive behaviour, exhibit an unusual posture or gait, and have irrational fears or phobias.

Additional Tips for Learning and Teaching

- Adjustments may need to be made to the classroom to address the student's under sensitivity/oversensitivity to noise, smell, taste, light, touch or movement.
 - Consider implementing structured and systematic programmes to develop the student's fine and/or gross-motor skills.
- Elicit relevant information regarding the student's eating, drinking and sleeping irregularities
- 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.

The following documentation must be presented to be considered for a place in the ASD class:

- Acceptance letter for NCC
- A completed NCC ASD Class enrolment form.

- An Educational/Clinical Psychologist's Report recommending the child is suitable for a placement in an Autism Spectrum Disorder classroom in a mainstream school.
- The contact details of the student's primary school to include special class / learning support teacher.
- Any other relevant reports e.g. Speech and Language Therapy or Occupational Therapy
- A signed consent form from parents/guardians granting the school permission to access any relevant reports from previous schools attended.

Enrolment Procedure:

All vacancies in the ASD class will be filled, according to the NCC Admissions Policy:

Admissions Provisions:

In 2022, Naas Community College (NCC) opened a special class to cater for the special educational needs for students with Autism. NCC opened a second ASD class in September 2023, followed by a third class in 2025. Under Department of Education and National Council for Special Education (NCSE) guidelines there will be a maximum of six students per class. The Board of Management deals with the enrolment applications and are advised on admissions to the ASD class by the Admissions Team composed of the Principal, Deputy Principal(s) and the ASD Centre Coordinator. The Board of Management will have regard for relevant department of Education guidelines in relation to special class size and staffing provisions, and /or any other relevant requirements concerning accommodations including physical space and the health and welfare of existing and prospective students. Only applications in respect of students whose needs fall within the category of special educational needs provided by the Special Class will be considered.

In this respect:

- Applicants must provide an up to date psychologist report (no more than two years old) indicating a professional diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder meeting DSM V criteria.
- The report must indicate the student's cognitive ability/learning profile and contain recommendations regarding existing supports and educational interventions needed to best aid that student's progress.
- This report must recommend placement in a special ASD class.

- Students who apply must, in the judgement of the Admissions Team, have an ability to meaningfully participate in mainstream classes to be considered for enrolment in the NCC ASD class.
- Applicants must have reached 12 years of age on January 1st in the calendar year following the child's admission and should not be older than is appropriate to the peers in the respective year in which they are enrolling.
- All applications form part of the mainstream application and enrolment procedures. This ensures that a student in the ASD class will have the possibility of inclusion in mainstream class. For clarity, a student must first secure a place in the school through the mainstream application process, before they can be considered for a place in the ASD class.

Procedures for Enrolment:

- Applicants must submit a fully completed written Application Form for the ASD class accompanied by the up to date professional psychological assessment, as outlined in the Admissions Policy. This application process will begin no later than 21 days after the initial offer of a place at NCC.
- The Admissions Team will consider all available documentation related to the application and may seek further information from the Applicant's family to aid the decision making process, such as copies of the applicant student's work, their most recent Student Support Plan and any other relevant information.
- In the year prior to potential entry to NCC ASD classes, staff will contact the parents/guardians of the applicant student and may subsequently contact their primary school to arrange a school visit, to observe the student in their current educational placement. Parents/guardians will be made fully aware of the date, time and nature of this visit.
- Once a place in the NCC ASD class has been offered, the Student will be invited to participate in a transition programme. The student's participation in the transition programme is considered essential in ensuring their smooth transition to their new environment, as well as in facilitating the ASD class staff in making any necessary academic/other reasonable accommodations for the student in a pre-emptive and responsible manner. Failure to engage in the transition programme will result in the withdrawal of an offer of a place.

Places in the ASD class will be offered in order of the following criteria:

1. Current students enrolled in the school
2. Siblings of current students who apply
3. Students resident in the catchment area and attending one of the named feeder schools of NCC.
4. Students resident in the catchment area but attending a school outside the catchment area.
5. Applications from students who are resident outside the catchment area will only be accommodated in exceptional circumstances where they can be accommodated

Oversubscription:

When the number of applications exceeds the number of places available, the published selection criteria as set out in section above will apply and a waiting list shall be compiled which shall remain only for the school year in respect of which the applications are made. Where NCC is in a position to offer further places that become available in the special class for and during that academic year, places will be offered in accordance with the priority in which students have been placed on the Waiting List. If a student has secured a place in the mainstream school but not the ASD Class, and they wish to still be considered for any vacancy that may arise, they must make a new application during the dates specified by the school as being the period when it will accept applications for the ASD class. If a transfer student is offered a place in the ASD class from the Waiting List, the offer is subject to there being a place available in the relevant year group for that student. If there is not a place available in the relevant year group, the next person on the Waiting List for the ASD class will be considered for the place in question, but this will not change the initial student's place on the Waiting List.

Withdrawal of an offer:

An offer of admission may be withdrawn where:

- The information contained in the application is false or misleading in a material respect, or
- The applicant fails to confirm acceptance of an offer on or before the date set out in the annual Admissions Notice of the school for the academic year for which s/he is applying, or in the case of a late application, or second or third round offer, within two weeks, or

- An applicant has not indicated whether s/he has applied for and is awaiting confirmation of an offer from another school(s); whether or not s/he has accepted an offer of admission from another school(s). If an offer is withdrawn by the school, the Student on whose behalf the application was made shall lose his/her place on the General Admission list or Waiting List for that academic year and any subsequent applications for the same academic year on behalf of that Student shall be treated as a late applicant.

Appeals Process:

An Applicant who was refused admission because the ASD class is oversubscribed, or for any other reason other than oversubscription, and wishes to appeal this decision must submit his/her appeal in writing, via a Section 29 Appeal Application Form, available from the school office and on the school's website, for it to be reviewed by the Board of Management of Naas Community College at Millennium Park, Ocherstoan, Naas, Co. Kildare W91 PD87, Tel: 045850580, email info@naascc.ie Such an appeal must be brought within fourteen calendar days of receipt of the school's decision to refuse to admit. However, if a different time period for the bringing of such an appeal is specified by the Minister for Education after the publication of this policy, the same shall apply instead. If an Applicant is not satisfied with the decision of the Board of Management, or the Board of Management is not in a position to review the decision to refuse admission, the Applicant may apply to bring an appeal to an appeals committee established by the Minister for Education under section 29A of the Education Act 1998 As required by section 29C(2) of the Education Act 1998, an application to appeal must be based on the implementation of this Admissions Policy and Provisions, the content of the school's Admissions Notice and also set out the grounds of the request to appeal the decision.

Important information for parents:

Potential students will be visited by a member of the ASD team to observe the student in their existing placement, to liaise with the class teacher and to prepare for their transition to NCC

Potential students' parents will also be met by the ASD team to help with the transition.

There will be an annual review of the student's placement within the ASD class to ensure that the class continues to be the most suitable placement option available to the student.

As a student who is enrolled in the ASD class approaches 18 years of age a transition programme will be put in place to facilitate the student's move to further education or

training. A student's chronological age will be considered in assessing the appropriateness of their continued participation in the ASD classroom.

Some students with ASD may be more suited to mainstream and may not need to access the services of the ASD class on an ongoing basis.

Services such as Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy are provided by the Health Executive Service. Parents/Guardians please note that NCC has no control over these services.

Transitioning Students to NCC ASD Class:

1. Parents will fill in an application form for their child to enrol in the NCC ASD class if places are available – Forms will be emailed from admin@naascc.ie.
2. Should a space in the class be available and the application meets the criteria for entry, the ASD Coordinator will make initial contact with the parent.
3. A formal meeting will take place with the parents and primary school support team,
4. Contact will be made with the primary school and parent to invite the student to begin a transition programme to NCC. The programme and content will depend on the student's individual needs. Each student will be given a social story with images of the school and staff prior to the initial visit.
5. Students will be visited by a member of the ASD Coordinator to observe the student in their existing placement.
6. Students will be invited into the school to meet with the class teacher and observe the break-time schedule and change of class environment.
7. As with all students there will be an open evening for parents and an open day for the 6th class pupils to help with their induction.
8. Students will visit the school at different times to ensure they get full exposure to what school life is like in a secondary school.
9. Students have the option to complete the summer provision programme in NCC to aid their transition programme.
10. The students start in Naas Community College, the student follows a specific schedule set up by the ASD Coordinator, taking into account all the information gathered in the above processes. This schedule is sampled for an initial induction period.
11. Following the induction period the student schedule is modified as required.

12. Formal IEP/SSP process begins, this process will begin mid to late September but will be fully implemented by the October midterm, it will be continually monitored and reviewed.

Transitioning Students to Third Level and further placements

1. In the year prior to leaving school, discussions will take place with the Autism services section in the HSE and the Guidance Counsellor.
2. The ASD Coordinator and/or the Guidance Counsellor make contact with the parents and discuss what they hope to achieve for their children.
3. Contact will be made with the appropriate organisation by the Education Support Team/ASD class teacher and visits to suitable locations will be arranged. The ASD Coordinator/Guidance Counselor will make the first visit, (where possible) and hold a transition meeting with the new facility.
4. In the final year of school, where required, assistance will be given to the students on completing forms for the new facility and support will be given to aid the transition.
5. Students will be assisted in practising using public transport (where possible) to ensure the students are comfortable with making necessary journeys to ensure success in their next steps.
6. Students will be supported during social classes and the impending transition will be discussed regularly.

Implementation procedure

Following consultation with all the parties this policy will be implemented.

Success Criteria

- Students with additional needs access and benefit from the support provided by making real improvements in their academic performance and key areas such as literacy, numeracy, oral language, social and behavioural skills.
- Students with additional needs make measurable progress in each academic year.
- Students with additional needs play a full and active part in all aspects of the school.
- Students with additional needs have high levels of school attendance.

Monitoring Procedures

The Principal will monitor the implementation of the policy

Review Procedures

This policy will be reviewed by the Education Support team every January.

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 17/09/2025

Signed: [Signature] Signed: Cianan/Keegan

Chairperson of Board of Management Principal

Date: 17/09/2025 Date: 17/09/2025

Date of next review: 17/09/2026