

# Skills Programme



## Moate Community School

### Admissions Policy for ASD Special Class\*

\*This policy should be read in conjunction with Moate Community School Admissions Policy

## 1. Skills Programme

Autism is a behaviourally defined disorder, characterised by qualitative impairments in social communication, social interaction and social imagination, with a restrictive range of interests and often stereotype repetitive behaviour and mannerisms.

The aim of the Skills Programme is to provide a holistic learning and caring environment which facilitates students with autism (autism spectrum disorder commonly known as ASD) to reach their full educational potential within a mainstream post primary setting. This setting facilitates optimum inclusion as part of the school community with access to mainstream educational activities that are available and that are deemed appropriate to the ongoing education of the student.

The Skills Programme is funded and resourced by the Department of Education. The Board of Management of the school has the responsibility for the ongoing management of the Skills Programme, having regard to the funding, resources, services and space available.

## 2. Procedure for Admission

Every student must apply for admission to the school in the normal manner as outlined in the School's Admissions Policy. All students will be subject to the terms and conditions of that policy.

A separate Application form must also be completed for admission to the Skills Programme. This application form will be available from the school.

***Applications will only be considered in the year of entry of the student to Moate Community School.***

All applications must be accompanied by an educational/clinical psychologists or psychiatrists report that clearly specifies a diagnosis of autism and recommends placement in an ASD Special Class in a mainstream post-primary setting.

The Skills Programme will only cater for children who are 12 years of age or more and less than 18 years of age on the 1st of September of the school year in question, unless there is specific approval from the Department of Education for a particular student who is outside this upper age limit.

Following receipt of a completed application, supported with **all** required documentation (**see below required documentation**), applications will be considered by the Admissions Panel. (See **section 5 Admissions Panel**)

**IMPORTANT TO NOTE: Applications that are only partially completed or are not accompanied by the required documentation will not be considered as valid applications and will not be considered. They will be returned to the applicant.**

**The following documentation is required:**

1. A completed Application Forms.
2. An educational/clinical psychologists or psychiatrists report that clearly specifies a diagnosis of autism. Parents/guardians of applicant students need to provide the school with a full, written, original diagnostic history.
3. The most recent psychological/cognitive/multi-disciplinary etc. assessment (while in 5th/6th Class) which recommends placement in an ASD Special Class in a mainstream post-primary setting.
4. Reports from **all** previous schools attended **including** the Student Support File.
5. Signed consent from parents/guardians granting the school permission to access any relevant reports from previous schools attended, and any support agencies involved in the welfare and/or support of the child.

Parents/guardians will agree to share the contents of any further reports with the school, e.g. Psychological, Occupational Therapy or Speech and Language Reports.

**The process involves:**

- A referral from an external agency or telephone call or visit in person to Moate Community School by a parent/guardian.
- Both School and Skills Programme application forms are completed and submitted with all documentation outlined above.
- Fully completed applications are then recorded in the applications file.
- Entry into this file secures a place on the list of applicants. Only applications that meet the criteria for enrolment will be considered.
- Completed applications will be reviewed by an Admissions Panel who will make a recommendation to the Board of Management.
- The Board of Management will make a decision on enrolment of students.

- The Principal will be instructed to inform parents/guardians of their decisions and get signed acceptance forms from parents/guardians by a set date.
- Following the enrolment process the Principal and/or the SENCO (Special Needs Co-ordinator) will liaise with the parents/guardians of students who have accepted a place in Moate CS via their Transition Plan.
- Students that are currently enrolled in an ASD Special Class in another post-primary school will not be considered for transfer enrolment to the Skills Programme during the school academic year.

### 3. Criteria for Admission to the Skills Programme

The following criteria will apply in allocating places in the Skills Programme:

- (a) Available space. The Skills Programme will provide a maximum of twenty-four placements at any one time.
- (b) The educational needs of the student can be met by the available professional service.
- (c) Application approved by the Admissions panel (see **section 4 Admissions Panel**) and endorsed by Board of Management
- (d) Parents/guardians of the student must accept and agree to Moate Community School Code of Behaviour. The relevant section in the student journal must be signed by parents in September each year.

**If the number of applicants exceeds the number of places available, the following ranked criteria will apply:**

1. A student currently enrolled in mainstream in Moate Community School who has an ASD diagnosis and requires a placement in the special class.
2. Siblings and stepsiblings resident at the same address of a current pupil
3. Applicants attending the primary schools in our catchment area.
4. Applicants not attending primary schools in the catchment area and for whom Moate Community School is their nearest post primary school with an ASD special class.
5. All other applicants.

If the number of applicants at any ranked criteria above, exceeds the number of places available, then the available places will be allocated on the basis of Date of Birth, with priority being given to the oldest applicant at the criteria level and continuing thus forth until all places are filled. Should two or more applicants share the same date of birth, places will be allocated based on the date that the completed application form with all supporting documentation was received in the school.

## 4. Admissions Panel

All applications to the Skills Programme will be reviewed by an Admissions Panel, which will consist of the following members:

Principal and Deputy Principal/s

SENCO (and any relevant Special Education personnel deemed appropriate by Management)

### **The function of the Admissions Panel will be as follows:**

- a) To review all applications and all documentation relevant to a student applying for a place in the Skills Programme.
- b) To verify the Skills Programme's suitability in meeting the needs of the student.
- c) To make recommendations based on these findings to the Board of Management.

### **Final Decision**

The Board of Management reserves the right to appoint other members to the Admissions Panel as necessary and to seek the advice of external experts if required. The Board of Management reserves the right to seek an assessment from an appropriate independent professional in relation to any application.

**The final decision on any individual enrolment matters will be made by the Board of Management.**

### **Refusal to Admit**

The Board of Management may refuse the admission of a student if:

- The Skills Programme is oversubscribed.
- The student does not have a diagnosis of autism confirmed in a report by an educational or clinical psychologist or psychiatrist and/or does not have a recommendation for a placement in an ASD Special Class in a mainstream post-primary setting.
- The student has specific needs that, even with additional resources available from the Department of Education, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the student with an appropriate education.
- The Board of Management reserves the right to take other factors into account which they deem to be relevant.

## 5. Right to Appeal

Parents/guardians of applicants who are refused admission will be advised of their right to appeal.

Parents/guardians of applicants (or a student who has reached the age of 18) may appeal any decision to refuse enrolment to the Board of Management of Moate Community School. All appeals must be in writing and addressed to the Chairperson of Moate Community School, Board of Management.

In the event that such an appeal is unsuccessful parents/guardians (or a student who has reached the age of 18) may appeal the matter to the Secretary General, Department of Education under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

## 6. Review of Existing Placements

Students in the Skills Programme have an academic year of 167 days. The placement of each student will be subject to regular, at least annual, review by the Principal and school staff and where relevant, professionals external to the school.

A decision may be made as to whether the student will:

- (a) Forfeit their right to a place in the Skills Programme due to unexplained and prolonged absences.
- (b) Continue in the Skills Programme
- (c) Integrate fully into the mainstream school.
- (d) Seek an alternative placement.

### **Behaviour**

Students with special educational needs may display difficult, defiant, or oppositional behaviours. Any challenging behaviours or co-occurring needs must be disclosed to the school on the Enrolment Form.

All efforts will be made by staff at the school to manage such behaviour using various strategies.

All students including those with special educational needs are subject to the school's Code of Behaviour/Discipline and the terms of the Health and Safety Statement adopted by the Board of Management.

Where a student's behaviour impacts in a negative way on the other students in the Skills Programme or the students in a mainstream class, to the extent that their constitutional right to an education is being interfered with, as judged by the Board of Management, then the school reserves the right to advise parents/guardians that a more suitable educational setting should be found for their child.

## 7. Communication and Review of this Policy

Any parent/guardian who contacts the school and is interested in making an application on behalf of their child to the Skills Programme will be posted this policy on request.

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Board of Management or sooner if the need arises.

Ratified by Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman