

Enrolment Policy (Updated 8th October 2014)

This enrolment policy is set out in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998. Parents or guardians who require clarification of any aspect of the policy should contact the Chairperson of the school's Board of Management or the school Principal.

General Information

Gorey Educate Together National School is a Multidenominational, Child Centred, Co-Educational and Democratically Run primary school. The school is state supported and regulated by the Rules for National Schools and by the Department of Education and Science. The school delivers the national *Primary School Curriculum* and the *Learn Together* ethical education curriculum. The booklets *Information for Parents* and *What is an Educate Together School?* are available from the school office.

The school is a developing school, having opened in September 2005 with an enrolment of 26 pupils in classes from Junior Infants to Third. Four hundred and twelve children attend the school at present, in classes from Junior Infants to Sixth. Our current staffing is as follows: fifteen class teachers, eleven special education teachers, fifteen special needs assistants and an administrative principal.

Enrolment

All children are very welcome to join our school. Where the number of children exceeds the number of available school places our policy for enrolment is 'First Come First Served.'

Children's names are added to our pre-enrolment lists in the order in which completed pre-enrolment forms are received by the school.

We make written offers of school places each spring, until classes for the following August/September are filled. The Board of Management takes account of Department of Education and Science guidelines on average class size and staffing, as well as accommodation issues, when determining the maximum number of children in each class.

Children must be at least 4 years old by September 1st of the year in which they start school.

This enrolment policy does not give preference to the brothers and sisters of children already attending the school – younger siblings should also be pre-enrolled at the earliest opportunity.

Pre-Enrolment Procedures

Parents and guardians can obtain pre-enrolment forms from the school office. They can also complete an electronic pre-enrolment form on the school's website, www.goreyeducatetogether.ie (They may wish to do so soon after the child is born or placed in their care.)

The date when the completed pre-enrolment form is received by the school is noted on each form. (The school will send an acknowledgment to parents when forms are received.)

Each child's name is placed on the pre-enrolment list for a particular school year in the order in which his/her completed pre-enrolment form is received. Where two or more forms are received on the same day, they are put in alphabetical order. Where parents have twins/triplets/etc., the children are placed on the list one after the other.

No guarantee of a school place is given or implied by pre-enrolment.

Children will be offered school places strictly following the date ranking of the relevant pre-enrolment list. Again, school places are offered each spring on a 'First Come First Served' basis until classes for the following August/September are filled.

Parents or guardians must respond in writing to accept the offer of a school place by a specified date (usually within 14 days.) Failure to respond by the specified date will result in their child's place on the pre-enrolment list being forfeited.

It is the sole responsibility of parents and guardians to inform the school of any change of address (or other contact details.)

Deferrals

Parents pre-enrolling Junior Infants may defer their child's place for one year. This means that the child will be placed on the list for the following school year *according to their original pre-enrolment date*. Again, this does not guarantee an offer of a place, as places will be allocated strictly following the date-ranking of the pre-enrolment lists.

Special Educational/Care Needs

The parents or guardians of a child with special educational and/or care needs are requested to supply copies of all available medical or psychological reports to the Principal at the earliest opportunity. (If the child has not been assessed, an immediate assessment may be requested.)

The Principal will meet with parents to discuss the child's needs and to profile the special supports that may be required.

Where the supports go beyond those already in place in the school, the Principal will attempt to access the additional supports in a timely manner. (However, the processing of applications to the National Council for Special Education and/or the Department of Education will take some time.)

Special Classes for Children with Autism

Parents and guardians of children with a medical diagnosis* specifying Autism, (along with a recommendation for special class placement [because their needs cannot be met in a mainstream environment] may choose to pre-enrol their child in a mainstream class or, in consultation with the Principal, a Special Class for Children with Autism.

(*Assessment and classification of autism or autistic spectrum disorder by a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist using DSM-IV or ICD-10 criteria **OR** multi-disciplinary assessment of same by a professional team [including a clinical psychologist.]

The Principal (or the Deputy Principal/Assistant Principal) will meet with parents to discuss their child's strengths and needs. Parents would be fully informed re: this school, including the various workings of the mainstream and special classes. Parents would also be informed of possible alternatives, such as special schools. Existing school, psychological, medical, speech/language, occupational therapy and other reports will be considered. Staff will arrange to observe the child in his/her pre-school or some other setting. The Principal may also (with parents' permission) consult with the professionals who prepared reports on the child and the professionals with whom the school has an existing relationship (such as our National Educational Psychological Service psychologist) before making a recommendation to parents regarding the perceived suitability, or otherwise, of enrolling the child in a special class.

Where parents chose to proceed with the special class option, the principal shall make a report to the school's Board of Management, with whom the final decision on enrolment rests. (The principal may also recommend that the decision be deferred, pending the receipt of further information on the child.)

The school would also involve the family in planning for the child's enrolment, (e.g. a transition programme, identifying priority needs, reinforcers questionnaire, special diets, alternative treatments, etc.)

Each special class will have a maximum of six places. Each special class will be staffed by a registered teacher and by special needs assistants (SNAs.) The teacher and SNAs will have experience of, or an interest in, working with children with Autism. The teacher will receive ongoing specialist training through the Special Education Support Service (SESS,) as necessary.

The children will access a curriculum based on the *Primary School Curriculum* that is matched to their needs and capacities through carefully planned individual learning activities and through the use of differentiation strategies in group activities. Subject areas include: English, maths, social, environmental and scientific education (SESE,) social, personal and health education (SPHE,) music, visual arts, drama and physical education. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's *Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities* will be used to augment the implementation of the curriculum. An eclectic approach shall continue to be used within the special classes, that is, a range of teaching approaches (including those used in the school's mainstream classes) shall be employed, based on the individual needs of the children. The main approaches are as follows: play, language through play, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS,) Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-handicapped Children (TEACCH,) Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA,) Intensive Interaction & Relationship Development and Floortime. Social Stories will also be used.

It is hoped that the children entering our special classes would not require this provision for the duration of their primary school education. Integration with typically developing peers in inclusive mainstream classroom environments, in so far as possible, is the Board's aim.

The Board of Management's approach to integration is also framed by the *Educate Together* 'children of the school' model: i.e. 'the school is a collective organisation that strives to address the individual needs of every child. However, any school must balance these needs with the general interests of all the children.'

The nature of all integration shall be determined by the teaching staff, following reviews at appropriate intervals and consultation with the child's parents.

Increasing (and full) integration will be put in place for children who are successful in the integrated setting. (There would be an expectation that the child is capable of meaningful learning and functioning within the setting.)

Partial integration will take the form of contact during specific situations or curriculum areas, where particular skills & interests and/or learning can be advanced: e.g. structured social play groups, music lessons, drama, school trips, maths lessons, Social Personal & Health Education (SPHE) lessons, visual arts, school assemblies, class or school celebrations, etc.

The minimum level of contact for all pupils (limited integration) will include: some lunchtimes, some group activities and some playground breaks.

The Board of Management applied for multidisciplinary support for the special class, as follows: Speech and Language Therapy (HSE,) Occupational Therapy (HSE,) and Psychological support (National Educational Psychological Service.) All agencies now provide limited support.

Special Pre-School Class for Children with Autism

In spring 2013 the school's Board of Management agreed to a request from the National Council for Special Education to open a special pre-school class for children with autism. The Board's decision followed an examination of new & existing autism services in the north-Wexford area and consultations with school staff. The pre-school class opened at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, (29th August 2013.)

Similar to our existing special classes for school-age children, the pre-school class has 6 pupil places and is staffed by one qualified primary school teacher and two special needs assistants. **A child can take up a place in the pre-school class on/after his/her third birthday. The upper age for inclusion in this class is five.** (A child cannot be six during the school year.) Children must have a diagnosis of autism, along with a recommendation for special pre-school placement (because their needs cannot be met in a mainstream pre-school environment.) Places are allocated on a 'first-come-first-served' basis.

Admission to our special pre-school class does not imply that the child will later enter the mainstream classes or school-age special classes at Gorey Educate Together. The aim of the pre-school intervention is to help prepare the child for entry to his/her local mainstream school. (Parents interested in enrolling children in the mainstream classes or school-age special classes at Gorey Educate Together must adhere to the school's existing Enrolment Policy.)

Teaching and Learning: Please see the School Plan/*Plean Scoile* for our special classes. The TEACCH pre-school curriculum (with PEP3 assessment tool and/or New Portage assessment tool,) along with *Aistear* (The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework) may also be used as resources in the special pre-school class. **Integration & Inclusion:** Unlike our existing special classes for school-age children, pupils attending the pre-school will not be paired with our mainstream classes. **Multi-disciplinary support:** The National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS) will provide educational psychology support to pre-school children on a limited basis. The Health Service Executive (HSE) also provides limited support to the new pre-school class.

Non-Junior Infants

Parents and guardians may also pre-enrol children for classes other than Junior Infants, up to a maximum of one school year in advance (examples: September 2014 for September 2015, January 2015 for September 2015, etc.) Separate date-ranked pre-enrolment lists will be maintained for each older class on a school-year-to-school-year basis only. New lists are started on September 1st: families can re-apply on or after that date.

Non-junior infants cannot defer a place which has been offered to them. (However, parents and guardians may submit a new pre-enrolment form for a different year and/or class.)

Intake to the school usually takes place during August/September, but children may be admitted on other dates if school places become available.

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 contains provisions in relation to communication between schools in cases where children are transferring.

Appeals

In accordance with Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, parents or guardians may appeal the refusal to enrol a child (or the permanent exclusion or, in some cases, suspension of a child) to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science.

Code of Behaviour

The school's Code of Behaviour is appended to this enrolment policy, (or available on the school website.) Children enrolled in the school and their parents or guardians are required to support the Code.