Galway Educate Together National School (GETNS)

Seomra Shona Policy

(Special Classes)

2025/26

1. Introduction

The Seomra Shona (Special Classes) Policy was first developed in consultation with *Middletown Centre for Autism* and was drawn up with the support of members from *Galway ASC Teacher's Support Group* using the Middletown sample policies. Discussion and input was facilitated via email, small group meetings in local areas, team meetings in schools and Teacher's Support Group meetings in the Galway Education Centre. This policy was previously revised in 2023.

2. Definition and Terminology

The *Centre for Autism* defines autism as a lifelong developmental difficulty that impacts on how an individual communicates and interacts with others. It also affects how an individual makes sense of the world around them. Autism is a spectrum, which means that each individual with autism shares common difficulties in social communication and restrictive or repetitive patterns of behaviour or interests, however the level of severity across these difficulties will impact on individuals in different ways. Language around Autism is constantly changing and evolving. Please see links for up to date language use here: AsIAm, Transport for Ireland Language Guide and Neurodiversity Ireland.

Current estimates state that an estimated 1.55% of children attending primary schools in Ireland have a diagnosis of autism (*National Council for Special Education* [NCSE], 2015). Terminology in the area of special needs changes over time. Currently, GETNS uses the term 'autistic children' when describing children with an autistic profile. The use of 'identity first' language is endorsed by advocates within the autistic community including *Galway Autism Partnership* (GAP) and *AsIAm* Charity.

3. Meeting the needs of autistic children

GETNS opened its first class for autistic children on January 10th 2005. We are now proud to have three classes catering for eighteen children of primary school age. We currently have three classroom teachers and seven special needs assistants (SNAs) in special classes. Our three special classes are called Seomra Shona Gorm, Seomra Shona Dearg and Seomra Shona Glas.

GETNS has a suite of policies supporting inclusion and supporting children in their educational settings. These policies are available and easily accessible on the GETNS website on www.getns.ie including:

- Admission Policy 2025/26
- Code of Behaviour (Annual Review)
- Bí Cineálta (Annual Review)
- Behaviours of Concern Policy 2025
- Intimate Care Policy
- SEN Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement & Written Risk Assessment*

  *(Revised Procedures 2023 and 2025).

4. Aims

GETNS aims to meet the needs of autistic pupils by:

- providing a holistic, child centred, inclusive education
- Offering a variety of consistent, high quality provision
- Collaborating with a range of professionals and communicating with parents/guardians
- Planning to address the individual and specific needs of autistic pupils
- Delivering curriculum which balances social and academic need, mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- Ensuring that staff have access to continuous professional development and support

DES Circular 0023/2025 states that the primary function of a special class is to provide, 'the best educational setting for a child or young person at a point in time. It provides a supportive learning environment to children and young people who are unable to access the curriculum in a mainstream class, even with support, for most or all of their school day' (pg. 2). The evolving needs of children is highlighted in this circular, along with the need for an annual review of enrolment of any child attending a special class setting.

5. Admissions

The process around admissions to Galway Educate Together National School (GETNS) Seomra Shona (Special Classes) is covered within GETNS Admissions Policy, which was updated in September 2025. GETNS has in turn reviewed its Seomra Shona (Special Classes) Policy in light of the newly revised Admissions Policy in September 2025 and the newly released DES Circular 0023/2025. This circular directs special classes attached to mainstream primary schools, to conduct annual reviews of enrolment in their special classes.

As per our Sections 4-6 of our school's Admission Policy, GETNS will **not** discriminate in its admission of a student to the school on any of the following grounds:

a. sex or gender of the student or applicant,
b. civil status of the applicant,
c. family status of the student or applicant,
d. sexual orientation of the student or applicant,
e. religion of the student or applicant,
f. disability of the student or applicant,
g. race of the student or applicant,
h. the student or applicant's membership of the Traveller community,
i. the student or applicant in respect of the student/applicant concerned having special educational needs. However, because GETNS is a school which has established three special classes with the approval of the Minister for Education, which provide(s) an education exclusively for students with a category/categories of additional ("special") educational needs specified by the Minister, GETNS may refuse to admit a student to these classes where the student concerned does not meet the criteria for admission to such a class, see section 4 below.

These grounds are as per section 61 (3) of the Education Act 1998.

GETNS will cooperate with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) 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 additional ("special") educational needs, including in particular by the provision and operation of a specialised class or classes when requested to do so by the Council.

GETNS will comply with any direction served on the board or the patron under section 37A and 67(4)(b) of the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018.

Categories of Additional ("Special") Educational Needs catered for in Seomra Shona Gorm, Seomra Shona Dearg, Seomra Shona Glas.

GETNS, with the approval of the Minister for Education, has established three special classes to provide an education exclusively for autistic students / students with autism. A new DES Circular 0080/2024 issued to all schools reminds schools that children/young people must be eligible to access enrolment in special class, and that schools must ensure that the child/young person's professional reports are confirmed in advance by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and are in receipt of an eligibility letter from the NCSE before placements can be confirmed.

Children and young people are eligible for enrolment in a special class for autistic students / students with autism when the following is provided in support of such an application:

Professional report(s) outlining:

- **Diagnosis of special educational needs (*e.g. Autism: DSM IV/V or ICD 10/11 (psychologist, psychiatrist, multi-disciplinary report*)**

AND

- **A demonstration of the understanding of complexity of the child's overall level of need/s evidenced in the professional reports**

AND

- **Given the severity or complexity of the child's support needs, a clear professional recommendation as to what educational placement type would be most appropriate to best meet the child's needs, along with the rationale for same**

AND

- **A letter from the NCSE confirming that the child is known to them and that the child has the required diagnosis and recommendation for a special class for autistic students / students with autism.**

Admission of Students

This school shall admit each student seeking admission **except** where:

a) the school is oversubscribed (please see section 7 below for further details)

b) a 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 them and that they shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student.

c) The Seomra Shona Gorm, Seomra Shona Dearg, Seomra Shona Glas classes in GETNS provides an education exclusively for autistic students and the school may refuse admission to this class where the student concerned does not meet the criteria for admission to such a class as set out in section 4 above.

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 pre-school or pre-school service, including naíonraí, other than in relation to a student's prior attendance at—

(I) an early intervention class, or
(II) an early start pre-school, specified in a list published by the Minister from time to time;

(b) the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;

(c) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude; other than in relation to: admission to a class for autistic students / students with autism insofar as it is necessary in order to ascertain whether or not the student meets the eligibility criteria for such a class.

(d) the occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a student's parents;

(e) a requirement that a student, or his or her parents, 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 other than siblings of students who are enrolled in the school at the same time;

(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.

As this circular points out; all schools have a responsibility to be inclusive in their policies and practices. GETNS has committed itself firmly to the inclusion of children with additional needs, with three special classes for autistic children established in our school for over 20 years. For our special classes in particular, we have developed a newly renovated Multi-Sensory Room, Outdoor Learning Space and are looking to renovate our school's Gross Motor Room. We have a fully committed team of three special class teachers and seven special needs assistants that support our 18 special class students in their learning and development. Over the past number of years, we have sustained the summer programme for our special class students on our school campus in July.

6. Review of Enrolment in a Special Class Placement / Provision

DES Circular 0023/2025 states that **a review of enrolment should take place at a minimum, once every 12 months**, that includes a careful examination of the child or young person's response to intervention and progress in achieving targets, as outlined in their Student Support Plan. In order to assist these meetings, and transitions between school placements, templates for the following are in this policies Appendices Section.

- Information to Support Transition from a Special Class to another Special Class of the Same Designation
- Special Class Transfer Review Form Confidential
- Framework to Guide Transition Planning

What is a Review of Enrolment in a Special Class?

A review of enrolment in a special class, in the context of the ongoing problem solving process of assessment of strengths and needs, intervention and review, considers:

• The child or young person's learning, wellbeing and meaningful inclusion and participation in the whole-school community
• The child or young person's views and expectations of their educational experience
• The parent(s)/guardian(s) views and expectations in relation to their child's education
• The child or young person's progress in relation to the targets and interventions outlined in the Student Support Plan
• The opportunities that have been provided for the child or young person to participate in whole school activities
• The supports that have been provided to address barriers to the child or young person's participation in whole school activities with peers
• The views of relevant school staff on the child or young person's progress
• If enrolment in the special class remains optimal based on the child or young person's profile of strengths, needs, interests and response to intervention
• How the current planning for inclusion with peers across the whole school community can be developed, over time, to support the process of inclusion in mainstream classes where appropriate and agreed
• Review relevant professional reports where available

What Information is required for a Review of Enrolment in a Special Class?

Information gathered over time and recorded in the Student Support File is central to determining progress and consideration of the appropriateness of continued enrolment in a special class or transition from a special class into a mainstream class.

The following information should be considered as part of the review and recorded in the **Student Support File**:

- Perspectives of the child or young person on their experiences in school and aspirations for the future. To facilitate meaningful participation of children and young people in decision-making, schools are encouraged to have regard to the National Framework for Children's and Young People's Participation in Decision Making and the Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit. These are based on the Lundy Model of Child Participation and its four elements
- Perspectives of parent(s)/guardian(s) on the child or young person's progress, and aspirations for the future
- Perspectives of relevant school staff who have been involved in supporting the child or young person
- Details of progression of skills across all areas of learning and development, and progress in meeting agreed targets as recorded in the Student Support Plan
- Details of any relevant care needs including current supports and accommodations needed to address these needs
- Information on the frequency and nature of the child or young person's meaningful participation in learning and social activities with peers in mainstream classes and the whole school community
- Details of any significant changes in the child or young person's circumstances which may have impacted (positively and/or negatively) on their development and/or progress
- Details of any supports or involvement accessed through external agencies e.g. National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), National Council for Special Education (NCSE) or the Health Service Executive (HSE)
- Whether the child or young person is on a waiting list to access relevant services

Who is involved in the Review of Enrolment in a Special Class?

The review of enrolment in a special class is normally convened by the special class teacher/s and may be attended by:

• Child or Young Person (if appropriate)
• Parent(s)/Guardian(s)
• School staff which may include:

- Special Class Teacher
- Special Education Teacher / Class Teacher
- Principal/Deputy Principal
- Special Needs Assistant
- Relevant external professionals, as deemed necessary

The child or young person's views will form part of the review either in person or will be represented at the meeting, as appropriate.

When does the Review of Enrolment in a Special Class take place in GETNS?

- Review of enrolment in a special class will form part of the October **School Support Plus Plan** meeting in GETNS, and will take place annually.
- The timing of this special class placement review will allow for adequate time to follow up on agreed actions before the end of the current school year.
- There is also a **School Support Plus Plan Review** meeting again in **February**. It will need to be confirmed at this meeting, whether a student is transitioning to mainstream for the following school year as schools are required to complete **NCSE Form 5 Leavers Form** and forward to their NCSE Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) as soon as possible.

Appendix 3 Framework to Guide Transition Planning in Appendices Section of this policy is a companion document to support a whole-school review process. It provides an outline of the process and key questions to support collaborative decision-making.

What are the Outcomes and Actions from the Review of Enrolment in a Special Class?
In line with DES Circular 0023/2025 these are:

1. Continued enrolment in the special class with planned support for inclusion pending the next review

For many children or young people, the review process will identify the need for continued enrolment in the special class for the following year, with ongoing planning and support for the child or young person's priority learning needs, pending the next review. It is important that children and young people are afforded every opportunity to maximise and benefit from inclusion with their peers. Where it is agreed that enrolment in the special class continues to

be most appropriate in meeting the child or young person's needs, the review process will specify opportunities for increased inclusion with the wider school community. Such opportunities should be incorporated into the Student Support Plan for targeted support and intervention.

2. Full Enrolment in a Mainstream Class

Some children and young people enrolled in special classes spend a considerable part of the school day participating in learning and social activities with their peers in mainstream classes and in whole school activities. This enables children and young people to access the curriculum in a mainstream class for most or all of the school day with appropriate supports. In such cases, consideration should be given to planning for full enrolment in a mainstream class, in collaboration/consultation with the child or young person and their parent(s)/guardian(s). To support this process, the Student Support Plan should document planning for increased participation in activities with peers.

Where a phased process of transition into the mainstream class has taken place over time, the parents/guardians, school staff and the child/young person agree that full enrolment in the mainstream class is most appropriate in meeting the child/young person's needs. Following the transition into the mainstream class, the child/young person will continue to receive ongoing support and intervention, as required, through the Continuum of Support, and their progress will continue to be monitored and reviewed. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and the child/young person should be assured that this will include support from:

- A Special Education Teacher
- A Special Needs Assistant (if appropriate)
- If needed, access to the special class supports

While a student or young person can continue to have access to the special class supports, they are enrolled in the mainstream class, and the class teacher, in this case the mainstream teacher, maintains their primary responsibility for the progress and care of all children in their classrooms, including children with special educational needs (see Supporting Transition section below).

The views of the parent and student will be central in this process. Parents/guardians may not be aware of the extent of support that can be provided to children/young people by class teachers, special education teachers and special needs assistants in mainstream classes. Therefore, particular emphasis should be placed on detailing how those supports are provided in mainstream classes as part of the Continuum of Support. Parents need to be informed about:

Special Class Placement Levels of Support:

- Access to Special Classroom with one special class teacher (Ratio 6:1)
- Access to shared SNA support (Ratio 6:2 on 2024/25 SNA Allocation Model)
- Mainstream integration as detailed in Student Support Plus File
- Timetabled for access to Multi-Sensory Room & Gross Motor Room
- Weekly Swimming lessons integrated into school day throughout the school year (Wednesdays).

Mainstream placement Levels of Support:

- Within our schools Continuum of Support, the maximum level of support in GETNS is 30min per day of tuition with the Special Educational Teacher.
- This is the allocation for any student on **School Support Plus** in GETNS mainstream.
- The allocation of Continuum of Support is dependent on children's needs across all our classrooms. Those of greatest need receive the greatest support. As our school's level of SET support is finite, the school needs to prioritise those with the greatest needs.
- Shared access to an SNA. There may be multiple children within one class, accessing one SNAs support for their primary care needs.
- Within GETNS, priority access to the Multi-Sensory Room, Gross Motor Room and other specialised rooms is given to students attending our special classes. **Access to these rooms will be extended to children who have moved from a special class placement to a mainstream class placement.**
- Swimming in GETNS for mainstream students is scheduled from mainstream classes 3rd - 6th inclusive for approximately nine lessons per school year. Children attending mainstream classes are not integrated with the special class swimming lessons.

There is an option for schools to liaise with NCSE Regional Teams who can provide advice to school staff to support a planned transition to full enrolment in a mainstream class. Typically, the child or young person who transitions to full enrolment in a mainstream class(es) spends a considerable part of the school day participating in learning and social activities with their peers in mainstream classes and in whole school activities.

Children and young people who have transitioned from a special class into a mainstream class will have access to special education teaching supports, in line with the Continuum of Support, when needed (see Table above). This may mean, for example, that the child or

young person's learning needs may be best met on an individual or small group basis or through access to effective team teaching approaches. The approaches and the context of SET teaching (individual/small groups/in-class support) is determined by the student's learning outcomes and targets as set out in their Student School Support File.
From time to time, some children and young people may benefit from continued access to special class supports. For example, a child or young person who transitions to a mainstream class may be best supported, where necessary, by a Special Needs Assistant known to them. While GETNS will endeavour to be as flexible in our approach, the needs of all children are taken into consideration for these decisions.

Access to Resources

Within GETNS, priority access to the Multi-Sensory Room, Gross Motor Room and other specialised rooms is given to students attending our special classes. Access to these rooms for children who have moved from a special class placement to a mainstream class placement will be continued, commensurate with needs.

Access to SNA Support

No student in either the mainstream or special class settings has 1:1 SNA access. Levels of access are determined by a child's level of 'primary care needs'. There is an NCSE Quick Reference Guide that explains this in summarised form.

Where none of the options are agreed following the Review, and where further advice is deemed necessary to support decision-making in this regard, GETNS can request National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) advice. If there is a consultation between a GETNS staff, parents, and NEPS an **Indirect Referral Form** is required to be filled. The availability of NEPS around this consultative role cannot be guaranteed, as NEPS are an external agency to GETNS. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) can also be contacted for advice. Schools should contact their SENO or assigned NEPS psychologist/local NEPS office in these cases.

Transport

School transport services are operated by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department of Education. Children/young people are eligible for transport under the School Transport

Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs where they are attending the nearest recognised mainstream school, special class/special school, that is or can be resourced, to meet their special educational needs. Eligibility is determined following consultation with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) through its network of Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENO). Where a child or young person is transitioning to full enrolment in a mainstream class(es) within the same school, the child/young person will retain their entitlement to school transport. It is important to note that this is not the case when transitioning from an Early Intervention Unit or Speech and Language Class, in these cases a new application is required.

Supporting the Transition

This section outlines the process of supporting transitions from special classes in mainstream schools following a review of enrolment.

1. Transitioning from a special class in primary or post-primary schools to full enrolment in mainstream

Information required to support decision-making with regard to transition is outlined in DES Circular 0023/2025. Where there is agreement between parents/guardians, child/young person, teachers and, where appropriate, relevant professionals, that full enrolment in a mainstream class is deemed to be the most appropriate in meeting the child/young person's needs, the school should complete **NCSE Form 5 Leavers Form** and forward to their NCSE Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) as soon as possible.

DES Circular 00/62/2024 outlines the role of the class teacher. Class teachers adapt their teaching approaches and methodologies, and make specific accommodations for children within the class, in response to concerns arising in relation to an individual child's progress, application, communication, emotional regulation, or interaction with peers.

Class teachers have primary responsibility for the progress and care of all children in their classrooms, including children with special educational needs. Class teachers adapt their teaching, learning and assessment approaches for children with special educational needs. This can be achieved by, for example:

• Varying the structure, content, mode of instruction and pace of lessons to ensure the meaningful participation and engagement of all children
• Adapting lessons to take account of a child's interests.
• Matching tasks to the child's strengths, interests and needs.
• Adapting and utilising resources, including the use of visual supports, and technology.

As stated in DES Circular 0030/2014, students with challenging behaviour needs, in the first instance, should be supported by their class teachers, other school staff members, and by whole school policies on the management of behaviour in schools. The responsibility for the overall progress of students with behavioural difficulties lies with the classroom teacher. The emphasis in the school situation should be on the development of well co-ordinated interventions in response to the child's identified needs. The provision of 10 appropriate teaching and health supports, as required, should result in improved behaviours, leading to improved educational outcomes for children with Emotional Behavioural Disorder (EBD) or Severe Emotional Behavioural Disorder (SEBD).

For children who are experiencing behavioural difficulties or who have received a diagnosis which places them in the EBD disability category, it should not be assumed that all children who have some form of emotional behaviour disturbance require access to SNA support or that SNA support is the appropriate intervention in each instance.

2. Transitioning from a special class in a junior primary to a special class of the same designation in a senior primary school

For children enrolled in a special class in a junior primary school, the review process informs decision-making in relation to the most appropriate educational provision to meet the child's needs in the senior primary school. Information required to support decision-making with regard to transition to a senior primary school will be the same as the review process (previously outlined in DES Circular 0023/2025). Where there is agreement between parent(s)/guardian(s), child, teachers and, where appropriate, relevant professionals, that enrolment in a special class of the same designation continues to be the most appropriate in meeting the child's needs at the time of transfer, the following steps should be followed:

- The principal, parent(s)/guardian(s) and child (where possible) complete and sign the Transition Form (see Template 1)
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) apply for enrolment in a special class (of the same designation) in the senior primary school

School-based information is sufficient to inform decision-making in the vast majority of transitions where there is agreement and clear evidence that the current level of support in the special class continues to be required for the child or young person's active and meaningful participation in school life and learning. **No new professional reports or recommendations will be required when a child transitions from a special class in a junior primary to a special class of the same designation in a senior primary school.**

A special class in primary school to a special class of the same designation in a post-primary school.

Similarly, for 4th and 5th class students enrolled in special classes, the cumulative review process informs decision-making in relation to the most appropriate educational provision to meet the child or young person's needs in post-primary school.

It is recommended that planning for the transfer to post-primary school should start two to three years in advance of the transition (NCSE, 2024). **Preparation for transition to post-primary school should be discussed and included in the review of enrolment in a special class, held from 4th class onwards. Early preparation and planning is essential to support informed decision-making on the part of parent(s)/guardian(s) and the child/young person for the preparation of a phased transition plan.**

A decision in relation to whether the special class continues to be the most appropriate enrolment for the child/young person in post-primary school should form part of the review meeting when the child/young person is in 5th class. Decision-making is a collaborative process involving parents/guardians, and relevant teachers. The views of the child/young person are central to this process. The school may also consult with external agencies, including NEPS, NCSE and/or HSE, who may advise in relation to the decision-making

process where there are concerns with regard to the appropriateness of enrolment in a special class to meet the needs of the child/young person in post-primary school.

Information required to support decision-making with regard to transition to a post-primary school will be the same as the review process (previously outlined in this circular). Where there is agreement between parent(s)/guardian(s), child/young person, where possible, teachers and, where appropriate, relevant professionals, that enrolment in a special class of the same designation continues to be the most appropriate in meeting the child/young person's needs in post-primary school, the following steps should be followed:

• The principal, parent(s)/guardian(s) and child/young person (where possible) complete and sign the **Transition Form** (Appendix 1).
• Parent(s)/guardian(s) apply for enrolment in a special class (of the same designation) in the post-primary school.

School-based information is sufficient to inform decision-making in the vast majority of transitions where there is agreement and clear evidence that the current level of support in the special class continues to be required for the child or young person's active and meaningful participation in school life and learning. **No new professional reports or recommendations will be required when a child/young person transitions from a primary special class to a post primary special class of the same designation.**

What to do if further support is required for the review process
Following on from a review, for some children and young people, there may be a query as to whether enrolment in a special class continues to be the most appropriate based on the child or young person's current level of strengths, needs and response to intervention.

In such instances the involvement of external professionals will continue to be required in order to provide support to the child/young person, parent(s)/guardian(s) and school staff in the decision-making process. Schools should contact their NCSE Regional Team or assigned NEPS psychologist/local NEPS office in these cases. Further information and guidelines on supporting transitions can be accessed on the NCSE website www.ncse.ie.

7. Staffing

Each class is led by a classroom teacher. Additionally each class also benefits from support of two special needs assistants (SNAs). The *National Council for Special Education* determines the SNA allocation for GETNS mainstream and special classes via the *Special Educational Needs Organiser* (SENO). Like every other primary school, GETNS is subject to annual review and is based on the overall needs of the school and special classes. GETNS realises the importance of predictability and routine for autistic children. GETNS will endeavour to ensure consistency around staffing and cover during staff absences.

8. Teaching approaches

Teaching approaches range from one-to-one teaching, group teaching as well as inclusion in mainstream class lessons where suitable. We believe that pupils' independence should be promoted wherever possible and, although there will be some opportunities for pupils to work one-to-one with staff throughout the day, we do **not** have a school practice of providing continual one-to-one support for pupils. Instead an inclusive approach to education is adopted. This helps to develop students' independence in their academic work, living skills, social cognition and friendships.

9. Learning environments

An organised and well structured learning environment is essential for the development of good learning habits. GETNS provides support for autistic children for regulation and designates specific times and spaces to develop students' social, emotional and learning needs. These include:

- Gross Motor Room and Sensory Room
- High level of visual support eg. timetables/first then
- Clear teaching areas and opportunities for interaction
- TEACCH Approach
- Opportunities to develop intended and spontaneous communication
- Low arousal environments
- Access to other environments where possible e.g. kitchen, outdoor areas
- Mainstream classrooms
- Seomra Shona Assembly
- Whole school assembly

Seomra Shona students attend swimming lessons throughout the entire school year. Regular outings and excursions are organised so that students have opportunities to develop social skills and friendships. Day trips range from local outings to drama/children's literature workshops to visits to GAP house, Westside Library, local coffee Shops, bus rides, Dangan Woods/Pitches/Nursery, Westside Playground, fast-food outlets, cinema and play-zones. Trips further afield include visits to historical sites i.e. castles and where possible attendance on school tours with mainstream classes. Social narratives are used to prepare students for events that they may not be familiar with. Advance warning to students around changes in plans is also something that special class teachers and SNAs are keenly aware of. Over the past three years, GETNS Board of Management has also covered the cost of a 10 week Music Therapy Programme for our special class students.

1. Curriculum

GETNS is an Educate Together primary school. Themes from the *Learn Together Curriculum* are interwoven into lessons particularly in the area of Social, Personal, Health Education. These themes are also celebrated at Seomra Shona and Whole School Assemblies. These enhance students' sense of self, belonging, awareness of diversity and identity. The academic curriculum delivered at GETNS is based on the Irish Primary Curriculum (1999) which is individually differentiated to address the learning needs of students.

The curriculum is designed to be broad and balanced taking into account the social, academic, social, emotional needs and general wellbeing of pupils with autism. The overall curriculum delivered at GETNS includes opportunities to address the following:

- Communication and Language/Engagement/Joint Attention
- Interaction/Social Skills
- Flexibility of thought
- Sensory sensitivity and regulation
- Anxiety
- Independence Skills
- Self Care
- Safety Awareness
- Real life experiences outside of the school environment

2. Individual Support

Teachers differentiate learning opportunities for autistic pupils in a variety of ways. Generally, children attending special classes are at the Student Support Plus level of support within the Continuum of Support as set out in the Special Educational Needs Model (2017). Individualised supports include:

- Student Support File
- Behaviour Support Plan
- Emotion Regulation Plan
- Intimate Care Policy
- Support in adhering to Code of Behaviour
- Positive Handling for some Behaviours of Concern
- Personal Pupil Plan

Additionally, every autistic pupil has a pupil needs analysis which highlights areas of learning needs and strengths. The Student Support File covers the following areas:

- Communication
- Sensory Needs
- Social & Emotional Needs
- Independent living skills

3. Behaviour

The impact of an autistic pupil's diagnosis may cause high levels of frustration and/or anxiety resulting in distressing behaviours/behaviours of concern which present as a barrier to their learning. At GETNS, we acknowledge that the following basic principles of good practice for children with this educational profile can reduce the incidence of such behaviour:

- Ensuring all staff have an awareness of the strengths and difficulties associated with autism and co-occurring conditions
- Providing a structured and consistent approach which enhances predictability

- Supporting pupils communication in order to reduce frustration
- An understanding that social interaction can place additional demands on pupils over and above academic learning intentions
- Addressing sensory needs throughout the day helps pupils to remain calm and focused
- Recording behaviours using eg. ABC/STAR charts and put in place Individual Behaviour Plans where necessary.
- Seek support from outside agencies if necessary, appropriate and available eg. Multi-Disciplinary Teams/Middletown/NCSE etc.
- GETNS will follow the school Code of Behaviour and Bí Cineálta (Anti-Bullying) Policies for all students in the special class.

4. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Staff have a range of CPD opportunities to enhance their understanding of autism and to develop their autism practice. Autism specific CPD is delivered through the NCSE and Middletown Centre for Autism. Staff have received positive handling training, and will be documented in the Behaviours of Concern addendum of GETNS Code of Behaviour in the school year 2023/24. GETNS endeavours to provide support to Seomra Shona teaching staff attending autism specific courses. Where possible, permanent members of teaching staff are placed in special classes so that there is continuity and a higher level of predictability for autistic students.

5. Communication & collaboration

Autism can be a complex and challenging condition therefore we recognise the need to collaborate with a range of other people to provide a holistic and consistent environment. *GETNS* communicate with parents / guardians through:

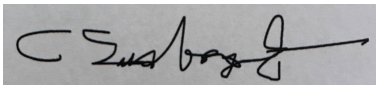
- Parent/Guardian - Teacher Meetings
- Support File and Review of Enrolment Meetings
- Open Classroom
- E-mails
- Whole school newsletters
- Communication Notebooks
- Seesaw and Google Classroom
- Phone-calls
- Instagram / Social Media

Professional collaboration is also fostered and developed with external professionals and agencies including:

- Children's Disability Network Team
- Brothers of Charity Services
- Autism Early Intervention
- Speech and Language Therapists (SALTs)
- Speech and Language Therapy Assistants (SALTAs)
- Occupational Therapists (OTs)
- Physiotherapists
- Educational Psychologists (EPs)
- Social Services Personnel
- NCSE
- NEPS
- Middletown Centre for Autism
- Galway Autism Teachers Support Network

Ratifications & Reviews

- Signed on behalf of GETNS Board of Management

Chairperson: 

Date: 02/10/2025

APPENDICES

Template 1:	**Information to Support Transition from a Special Class to another Special Class of the Same Designation**
Template 2:	**Special Class Transfer Review Form Confidential**
Template 3:	**Framework to Guide Transition Planning**
Links	**Further Resources**

***Templates from DES Circular 0023/2025**

Template 1:

Information to Support Transition from a Special Class to another Special Class of the Same Designation **This form should only be used to support the transition for children/young people currently enrolled in a special class**
Name:
PPSN:
Address:
Date of Birth:
Parent(s)/Guardian(s):
Current School:
Roll Number:
Type of Special Class:
Number of Years Enrolled in Special Class:

The following statements should be reviewed by school staff, parent(s)/guardian(s) and relevant professionals as appropriate.

Please insert **Yes** or **No** in the boxes in response to the following statements:	**Yes**	**No**
1. The child/young person has a Student Support File which outlines their needs and how these needs are supported by their enrolment in the Special Class		
2. Continued enrolment in a Special Class of the Same Designation remains appropriate based on a review of the child/young person's		

response to current level of supports and interventions		

Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian(s): _____ Signature of Child/Young Person (where possible):

_____

Signature of Principal: _____ Signature of Special Class Teacher: _____ Signature of Mainstream Class Teacher: _____

Date: _____

This completed form should accompany an application for enrolment in a special class of the same designation in another school, along with the following documentation:

- Evidence of a professional report(s) with clinical diagnosis aligned with the type of special class to which the application for enrolment is being made
- Current Student Support File outlining the child/young person's needs, supports, adaptations, interventions and opportunities for inclusion with mainstream peers
- Details of any care needs, supports and accommodations required • *Education Passport*
- The ***Education Passport*** materials support a 3-phase process to the transfer of student information from primary to post-primary schools.
- *My Thoughts about School* (or similar outlining the child/young person's views)

Template 2

Special Class Transfer Review Form Confidential To be completed when a child or young person is transitioning to a special class of the same designation in another school.

Name:
PPSN:
Address:
Date of Birth:
Parent(s)/Guardian(s):
Current School:
Roll Number:
Type of Special Class:
Number of Years Enrolled in Special Class:

SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Involvement of external agencies/professionals (e.g., Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, CAMHS, TUSLA, NEPS, NCSE)		
Name of professionals/agency	**Nature and dates of involvement**	**Summary and recommendations**

…..

Summary of School Based Assessment*

Date	Observations/data collected/ tests administered and results

***School based assessment may include formative and summative assessment across all areas of learning and development**

SECTION 2: PROFILE OF SKILLS, STRENGTHS, MOTIVATORS AND NEEDS ACROSS AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT

Areas for consideration	Strengths, motivators and needs identified in consultation with the child or young person, key members of staff and parent(s)/guardian(s)
Learning Environment	

Language and Communication Development	
Social Development	

Emotional Development	
Sensory Development	
Functional skills for daily living (self care, personal safety, independent living, community living)	
Learning across the curriculum	
Literacy skills	

Numeracy skills	

SECTION THREE: PROVISION IN CURRENT SCHOOL

Detail any approaches, supports or strategies that are currently in place to meet priority needs identified:
Detail how transitions are supported across the school day:
Detail the level and frequency of the child/young person's participation in activities (whole-school, class and extra-curricular) with peers across the school community: NEPS Continuum of Support 2010
What supports the child/young person's participation in whole-school activities with peers?

What are the child/young person's views, hopes and preferences for school and their future?
What are the parent(s)/guardian(s) views and expectations in relation to their child's education?

What are the key recommendations to support the child or young person in their new school?

Names of persons involved in review:

Do parents give consent for this information to be passed to the new school?

Yes / No

Please name school: _____

Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian(s): _____ Signature of Child/Young Person (where possible):

_____

Signature of Principal: _____ Signature of Special Class Teacher: _____ Signature of Mainstream Class Teacher: _____

Date: _____

This completed form should be shared with the child or young person's new school along with the following documentation:

- Current Student Support File outlining the child/young person's needs, supports, adaptations, interventions and opportunities for inclusion with mainstream peers.
- NCCA Education Passport
- My Thoughts about School (or similar outlining the child/young person's views)

Template 3

Framework to Guide Transition Planning Transitioning students from special classes to mainstream classes or other special classes of the same designation is a process that requires careful planning and collaboration among educators, parent(s)/guardian(s), and the child/young person themselves.		
What this looks like in school practice	**What are we doing?**	**What do we need to do?**
Student Support Plan Review Review and update the child/young person's 'Student Support Plan' (SSP) to reflect transition objectives. Set specific, measurable objectives for the transition Involve teachers, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the child/young person in planning Schedule regular meetings to discuss progress and concerns Including the voice of the child or young person		

Inclusion Does the child/young person participate with peer classroom activities? What planning is there to promote the child or young person's increased participation in classroom activities? Consider the environmental supports. What visuals are used? Where does the child/young person sit in the mainstream classroom? Do children or young people from other classes come to the special class to share activities and build relationships?		

What supports are in place for inclusion in whole school activities such as assemblies?		

Transition throughout the day Transition from home to school - is there a welcome time? Does the child/young person need to regulate when they come to school? Transition to and from activities - does the child/young person need support with this? Countdown timers - transition object or card? Transition to home - is the child/young person prepared? What supports are needed? Would a social story aid understanding? Are transitions planned for with parent(s)/guardian(s)?		
Key Elements of Transition Planning **When?** Plan early if the child/young person's enrolment is changing **Who?** Teachers, SNAs, the child/young person, family, health and other professionals (when needed) **What?** Devise the transition plan and actions that are achievable and focused on changing the environment not the child/young person		
Priority area(s) for further development:		

FURTHER RESOURCES

What we wish we knew AsIAm Behaviour Resource

Relate Resources NCSE Relate Document

Autism Good Practice for Schools DES Publication

Neuro-affirmative approaches NCSE Neuro-affirmative Approaches