



Ábalta Special School Admissions Policy

Introductory statement

Ábalta Special School under the patronage of Autism Ireland is a special school funded by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) for children with autism and complex needs. The school welcomes any referrals for enrolment to the school and any student aged between 4 and 18 years of age who has a confirmed single diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum as per DSM-V criteria or ICD-10 criteria by a registered psychologist or has a confirmed (primary) diagnosis of Autism will be considered for enrolment in accordance with the policies and procedures more fully defined below. This enrolment policy is set out in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000, the Disabilities Act 2005, The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and the rules for national schools as updated by relevant DES circulars.

General Information

Ábalta Special School is one of 12 schools currently recognised by the Department of Education and Skills in 2010 as a special school established to educate those with autism and complex needs. Ábalta Special School has grown from its 2001 parent-led establishment as a centre for children with autism to its current status as a special school that offers a range of child-centred educational programmes strongly focused on helping children with autism reach their individual potential. The goal of the Ábalta programme is the building of skills for success at home, school and in the community. The school believes that each child, with a diagnosis on the autism spectrum, is unique and therefore should have access to a range of evidence-based interventions that meet their individual needs. Ábalta follows this principle with a multi-disciplinary approach to service delivery and a strong focus on evidence-based instructional principles and methodologies such as Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA), Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Lámh (manual signing system), discrete trial, verbal behaviour, direct instruction, Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) etc. in line with the DES policy for special education for children on the autism spectrum. These programmes are founded on empirical evidence and a child-centred learning philosophy; allowing each child to reach his / her own individual goals and progress at their own pace. In addition, supplemental specialist services of speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and behaviour analysis are made available to children in attendance as the needs present themselves and resources are available.

Ábalta Special School follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the Department of Education and Skills, which may be amended from time to time in

accordance with Sections 9 and 30 of the Education Act (1998). Ábalta Special School supports the principles of:

Inclusiveness – particularly with reference to the enrolment of children with a disability or other special educational need.

Equality- of access and participation in the school

Parental choice – in relation to enrolment and involvement in the school

Respect of diversity- of values, beliefs, traditions and languages

Ábalta Special School depends on the grants and teacher resources provided by the DES. It also operates within the changing regulations laid down, from time to time by the DES. Ábalta has regard for the resources and funding available to meet the individual needs of students and the number of children per class. Training in the basic skills of communication, self-care and key social competences for an integral part of the school programme at all levels. Children are divided into classes according to their age, skill strengths, developmental needs and their communicative ability.

Current school population

Currently, the school caters for upto 18 children across 3 classrooms and is allotted a staff comprised of an Administrative Principal, a Behaviour support and learning therapist, 3 Primary qualified teachers, 14 SNA's and an administrator. The Health service Executive (HSE) funds speech and language and occupational therapy services on a limited basis to work with the students in the school. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) also provides a limited service to the school. Behavioural support services are offered from within the school community and from external consultation where the needs present themselves and the resources are available to fund such services.

The AIM of Ábalta Special School

1. To create a welcoming and open environment where students and their families can interact in a secure and supportive manner and where positive relationships with others can be fostered and maintained.
2. To provide a child-centred autism specific education, which draws on a range of evidence based interventions in line with the Minister's Policy for Education.
3. To ensure students have access to a broad, balanced, relevant and developmental range of curricular experiences in each dimension for learning as set out in The Primary School Curriculum (1999) and any other appropriate curricular resources.
4. To tailor each child's programmes to their individual needs and facilitate the development of each child's unique potential.
5. To interact with and develop community links in special education, autism and evidence-based teaching practices on a local, national and international level.

Enrolment procedure

- Before an application is made, parents / guardians should ensure that:
The child will be 4 years old on or before the 1st of September of the year in which it is proposed to enrol the child.
- The child has a recent (within the last 2 years) documented and confirmed diagnosis of Autism Spectrum. The report must detail the assessment and classification of autism or autism 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 / educational psychologist).
- The pre-enrolment application form is completely filled out.
- All supporting documentation that ensures a complete overview of the child is attached to the application form including but not limited to current pre-school / school placements reports, home tuition reports, psychological reports, medical reports, speech and language reports, occupational therapy reports and / or behavioural support reports.
- The child is living within a reasonable distance from the school and travel time is within acceptable parameters between home and school facilities. Reasonable distance will be defined in accordance with the DES transportation department and the normal special school transport scheme for pupils.

The Board of Management (BOM) of Ábalta Special School recognises that parents / guardians have a desire and a legal right to request that their child be enrolled in a school of their choice. The BOM also recognise that the decision to admit new entrants into the school must be made with the understanding of the resources available within the school community to meet the unique needs of each child admitted and, in particular the children already enrolled in the school. Decisions as to enrolment therefore require balanced judgements, guided by the principles of natural justice and acting in the best interests of all children affected, or potentially affected by such decisions.

The school enrolment policy must also uphold the framework of the relevant legislation set forth for special schools. As such, attention is drawn to Section 2 of the EPSEN Act 2004, which provides that a child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive setting unless such an arrangement is inconsistent with the best interests of the child or with the effective provision of education for those children with whom the child is to be educated.

As such guidelines define this enrolment policy, enrolment in Ábalta Special School will be confined to pupils for whom there is clear evidence that enrolment in a special school for autism and complex needs rather than in a mainstream or special school for students with general learning disabilities is in the child's best interest. This is determined by the BOM in conjunction with the Principal / Behaviour and learning therapist and the Special Educational Needs Officer (SENO) with a comprehensive review of all supporting reports (such as one written by a qualified educational or clinical psychologist that state that the applicant child has a diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum based on the criteria specified in ICD 10 or DSM V) and that the report is dated in the two years prior to enrolment. This documentation should assert that it is in the child's best interest that s/he be enrolled in a special school for children with autism and complex needs. In the event of parents wishing to enrol their child in Ábalta School from another special school, the multidisciplinary team of the existing

school must give written approval that it is in the child's best interest to enrol in Ábalta Special school. It is recommended that applicants contact their local SENO and also keep the SENO informed of the progress of the application. The SENO can also make referrals to the school.

Children typically join the school in September / October subject to school policy, available space and the school's capability to provide for the child's specific needs. Admission at any other time throughout the school year will solely depend on the discretion of the School Board of Management recognising the needed resources and staff. A waitlist for available spaces as they become available is created to support the organisation of interested applicants. Children's names are added to a pre-enrolment waitlist in the order in which completed pre-enrolment forms and necessary accompanying documents are received by the school. Although children must be at least 4 years old for enrolment, parents / guardians can place their child on the waitlist as soon as a diagnosis has been confirmed in writing. This enrolment policy does give preference to the brothers and sisters of children already attending the school – younger siblings with a diagnosis should also be pre-enrolled at the earliest opportunity.

As far as possible, these families are kept informed of their position on the waitlist until such time as they wish to be formally removed and / or they are offered a place for their child in the school. Written offers of school places are distributed to applicant parents / guardians as they become available and the resources needs are put in place; until such time as the school has a full complement of students. The parents / guardians of a waitlist child will be contacted at minimum once a year by the waitlist administrator to ensure that they wish to remain on the list for the upcoming academic school year. If parents wish to have their child's name removed from the waitlist, they must do so in writing.

Pre-enrolment procedures

The Registration process begins with a telephone call, letter or visit from parents. Applications, incorporating date of application, date of birth, address and telephone number are entered in the applications file, see pre-enrolment application form, appendix 1. Applications will only be processed on the basis of a recent diagnostic or psychological report (less than two years old). The date of application recorded is the date that the relevant report is received by the school.

Parents seeking a place for their child must contact Ábalta Special School to arrange for their child to be put on the waiting list and make this request in writing. The school administrator will send an acknowledgement to the parents / guardians to notify the family of the date the application was processed in Ábalta. Each child's name is placed on the pre-enrolment list in the order in which his / her fully completed pre-enrolment form is received and accompanied by the relevant diagnostic documentation. No guarantee of a school place is given or implied by pre-enrolment.

As soon as it is determined that an appropriate class place is available the parents will be contacted in writing by the Board of Management of the School. Parents / guardians must respond in writing to accept the offer of a school place by a specified date within 10 working days. Failure to respond in writing by the specified date will result in their child's place on the pre-enrolment list being forfeited.

Parents / guardians cannot defer a place that has been offered to them. However, parents / guardians may submit a new pre-enrolment form to begin a new placement on the waitlist if they feel the timing of a placement does not fit with their child's needs at any given time.

It is the sole responsibility of parents / guardians to inform the school of any change of address or other contact details, in order to remain contactable should a place become available while on the waitlist.

Once a place becomes available, parents will be contacted by the school for an interview and assessment of the child's needs. Enrolment forms must be completed, see appendix II.

Transition into Ábalta Special School

On occasion, children may transfer into Ábalta from a different school or community service provider. This is subject to the school's enrolment policy and available space. Should this be the case, the transition period to Ábalta Special School will be determined at the discretion of the BOM and the Principal/ Director of Education. The decision of type and length of transition should be based on the individual needs of the child and the overall welfare of current students. For students who are transferring from an alternative service provider / school placement, a transitional document will be created outlining the recommended roles and responsibilities of each party involved and open communication between the parties will be established to ensure the best possible outcomes during the period of change. As transitions require some planning, a period of up to 6 weeks can at times be a reasonable expectation; however every effort should be made to make the transition a swift and reasonable process.

Curriculum

At primary level, the revised primary school curriculum is modified to cater for individual needs in so far as possible. Particularly the curricular guidelines for pupils with mild, moderate and severe and profound general learning disabilities is used in order to aid the curricular individualised planning. Group and individual teaching is used to develop perceptual and cognitive abilities. Special emphasis is placed on the acquisition of basic skills in attending, communication, social interaction, self-care, self-management, literacy and numeracy. The level and pace of learning is designed to meet the individual learning needs of each student.

At post-primary level, there is a practical bias to the programme. The curricular design is based on functional skills development. Adolescent autonomy skills are taught across the student groupings. In addition to the continued development of oracy, literacy and numeracy, special emphasis on pre-vocational guidance directs senior cycle students to ensure a greater sense of awareness and responsibility to work, leisure and post-school life. At this level, the main curriculum is the ASDAN where the wide variety of subject options reflect the range available in the post-primary schools and these are conducted at a suitable level for the students.

The educational provision within the school depends on the grants and staffing resources provided by the DES and the school operates within the regulations laid down, from time to time, by the DES. The school is classified as a primary school and adheres to the annual calendar of primary schools. DES circular 11/95 outlines the

required time in school which includes: 183 teaching days in the school year and 5 hours and 40 minutes as the minimum number of instruction hours per day. The annual school calendar is set out in September and offered to each family for information and planning. Every effort is made to minimise the number of changes to these schedules during the school terms.

Service expectations

The principal and Behaviour support and learning therapist will meet with parents / guardians to discuss their child's strengths and needs, profile the supports that may be required as well as the suitability of enrolment. Where the supports required for success go beyond those already in place in the school, the BOM reserve the right to refuse enrolment on grounds of 'Exceptional Circumstances' e.g. a prospective pupil presents with physical needs such that, even with additional resources available from the DES, the school cannot meet such needs and / or provide the pupil with an appropriate education.

A comprehensive approach to education and learning will be used within the school, that is a range of teaching approaches will be employed, based on the individual needs of the children and the overall principles of an autism-specific child-centred programme. All educational interventions with the child will be

- Specific to the child
- Based on the outcome of a psychological / behavioural assessment and an Individual Educational Plan (IEP)
- Evidence based
- Measured regularly with teaching objectives and outcomes monitored to ensure on-going success.

Parents will be consulted regularly with respect to their individual child's progress. Review meetings will occur at minimum on an annual basis, with additional meetings established on a case by case basis that may incorporate programme guides / assessment tools such as ABLLS-R / VB-MAPP, language targets, behaviour support plans etc, as well as standardised assessment tools where appropriate. The school is committed to encouraging all children, regardless of the special educational needs associated with an ASD, to explore their full range of abilities and opportunities and to actively participate in developmental / academic and or vocational programs where they and their families are respected in their own right. If the BOM considers that additional resources are required to meet the particular educational / safety needs of the child, an application will be made to the DES, via the SENO (Special Educational Needs Organiser) to provide same. A case conference may be called to discuss the needs of a particular child if appropriate.

Mainstream Placement

Children enrolled in the school may also be offered the opportunity to be included in the school life of an age-appropriate mainstream class should their skills be suitable for such an arrangement to be made. The nature of this integration will be determined by the Principal / Director of Education and participating staff, in consultation with the child's parents / guardians and the governing Principal of the selected mainstream school; with a view to maximising contact over time. The teacher of the main placement (on roll book) has responsibility for the child, irrespective of the number of days of the placement. The placement has to be of

benefit to the child and schools will work collaboratively to ensure the success of the placement.

Appeals procedure

The Board of management is obliged under section 19(3) of the Educational Welfare Act 2000 to make a decision in writing in respect of an application for enrolment within 21 days and to inform the parents in writing of that decision. In the event that an application for enrolment in Ábalta Special School is declined, a parent / guardian has a right to appeal the decision to the BOM, in writing, addressed to the Chairperson of the BOM, within 21 calendar days of being notified of the decision. Refer to Section 29 of the Education Act (as amended by Section 4 of the Education (Miscellaneous provisions) Act, 2007, available on the DES's website at www.education.ie for further information on appeals. The board of management has responsibility for preparing a response to the appeal committee if and when an appeal is initiated as state in Section 12, circular 22/02- processing of an Appeal.

Placement Review

Occasionally, concerns regarding the suitability of a child's continued attendance at the school may arise. In such circumstances, a review of the school's ability to continue to meet the child's needs, safety and the safety of others may be necessary. Any such review will be undertaken by a committee appointed by the Board of Management, in conjunction with the Principal, Director of Education and other relevant staff members. Parents / Guardians should be kept informed of any concerns that might arise in relation to their child's continued attendance at the school at the earliest opportunity. Parents / guardians will also be given an opportunity to engage in the discussion surrounding the placement and concerns that arise from the case itself. In the event that it is determined that the child is not suitably placed in the school, having regard for the realistic service options available at the time, the BOM may request a multi-disciplinary team assessment to be carried out to determine the best option for the specific child.

Code of behaviour

Parents / guardians of children enrolled in Ábalta Special School, the Board of Management, staff members, external consultants and volunteers are required to co-operate and support the school code of behaviour and all other policies and curricular organisation approved by the school's BOM. The Board of Management trusts that parents / guardians will also work collaboratively with school staff as they assist the students themselves in their effort to uphold the student code of behaviour. The Board of Management also expects that parents / guardians of children seeking to enter the school demonstrate the same positive collaboration and supportiveness to the staff and BOM.

Expulsion / suspension procedures are stated in the Ábalta Special School code of behaviour. After following the protocol stated in the named policy the parents will be notified by the Board of Management in writing in relation to suspension or expulsion. The content of the letter will provide information to access Circular 22/02 and other related forms.

If parents of a child enrolled in the school decide to remove their child from the school, both parents / legal guardians must do so in writing. If a student leaves the school and if his / her parents wishes to subsequently re-apply for enrolment for their

child, the enrolment procedure above applies. Re-enrolment is subject to Ábalta Special School being considered as the most suitable placement for re-enrolment by the transferring multi-disciplinary team, that the transfer is endorsed by the Ábalta school multi-disciplinary team and that Ábalta Special School board of management are in agreement that adequate resources are available for re-enrolment.

Policy Review

It is fully acknowledged by all parties that this enrolment policy will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it is kept up to date and that it retains its relevance. On-going evaluation and new approaches to education, Ministry guidelines and DES agreements may require this document to be modified.

Reviewed by the BOM on: _____

Signed by Chairperson of the BOM: _____

Next review period: annually

Appendix 1



Ábalta Special School,
Parkmore East Business Park,
Parkmore,
Galway
Phone: 091 701974
E-mail abaltaschool@yahoo.ie
Roll Number: 20371A

Pre-enrolment form

Part One - Contact Details

Date of Application _____

Child's Name _____

Child's address

Child's Date of Birth _____

Child's PPSN number _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) name: _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) name (if different from above) _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) phone numbers Home _____

Work _____ Mobile _____

Part Two – Diagnosis

Child's Diagnosis _____

Diagnosed by (Practitioner's name) _____

Diagnosed on (date) _____

Date child would be ready for entry to Abalta School _____

Does your child have any physical/medical challenges or concerns, aside from ASD?

Please attach a copy of any relevant psychological or medical reports

Part Three – Therapy History

ABA

Has your child ever received ABA therapy? **Yes** **NO**

If yes, where? _____

What type?

- Discrete trial therapy (DTT)
- Verbal Behavior (VB)
- Precision Teaching (PT)
- Other

When (dates) From _____ To _____

Speech and Language Therapy

Has your child ever received Speech and Language Therapy? **YES** **NO**

If yes, Where _____

When (dates) From _____ To _____

Who provided this therapy? _____

Please attach any relevant reports

Occupational Therapy

Has your child ever received Occupational Therapy? **YES** **NO**

If yes, Where _____

When (dates) From _____ To _____

Who provided this therapy? _____

Please attach any relevant reports

What other therapies, if any, have you implemented? _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Appendix II



Ábalta Special School,
Parkmore East Business Park,
Parkmore,
Galway
Phone: 091 701974
E-mail abaltaschool@yahoo.ie
Roll Number: 20371A

School Enrolment Form

Name of Child (in full, as on Birth Certificate) _____

Address at which child resides: _____

Telephone No: _____

Email address: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Child's PPS No: _____

Nationality: _____ Country of Birth: _____

If not born in Ireland, date on which child arrived in Ireland: _____

Mother's Nationality: _____ Father's Nationality: _____

***If you change your mobile number during the school year please inform us immediately as it is vital to keep records up to date in case of an emergency.**

Father's Name: _____ Present employment: _____

Work telephone No: _____ Mobile No: _____

Mother's Name: _____ Present employment: _____

Work telephone No: _____ Mobile No: _____

Guardian's Name: _____ Present employment: _____

Work telephone No: _____ Mobile No: _____

Is the child living with both parents _____

Position of child in family (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc) _____ Number of children in the family: _____

Did you child attend preschool: _____ for how long: _____

Where ? _____

Has your child ever had a psychological assessment? _____

Has your child ever received a speech and language report? _____

Name of brother/sister in this school: _____

Please give names, addresses and phone numbers of the people who have permission to collect your child from school. If there is any change in this routine **please inform the school in writing.**

Person who usually collects child(ren)

_____	Phone _____

Parents and legal guardians are entitled to be consulted and informed about their child's education and are entitled to access to their child during school hours. If there is any change in this regard or if there is any other information which you think may be relevant **it is very important that the school is informed immediately.**

Other relevant information: _____

School Emergencies/Sickness/Unexpected Closures, etc.

The following information will be used by the school in the event of:

- Your child feeling sick
- An emergency occurring while the school is in operation, making it necessary to close the school. In such an emergency, it is advisable to ensure the safe return home of pupils
- An unexpected closure of the school.

If my child gets sick, or the school has to close unexpectedly, etc and there is no one at home/the school is unable to contact me, please provide the name, telephone number and address of two other people you nominate for us to contact. We will ask this person to come and collect your child/children.

Person the school will contact

1 _____ 2 _____

Tel/mobile: _____ Tel/mobile: _____

Medical Emergency/Accident

That in the event of an emergency or accident, a member of staff will use his/her discretion and bring your child to a Doctor/Hospital. Every effort will be made to contact you.

I authorise that at their discretion a member of staff may bring my child/children to a Doctor/Hospital if an emergency arises.

Signed (Parent/Guardian) _____

List of Children _____

Family Doctor (Only if you wish)

Doctor's Name _____ Telephone No: _____
Do your child/children have any specific medical condition (e.g. asthma, eyesight, hearing etc.) or emotional problems which may affect your child at school?

It is the responsibility of parent(s)/guardian(s) to notify the school of any food allergies. Do your child/children have an allergic reaction to medication or food?

Is there any other relevant information about your child/children which we should know? __

I consent to my child's participation in the Stay Safe Programme

Parents Signature: _____

During your child's time in Ábalta Special School, it may be necessary from time-to-time for teachers to carry out diagnostic testing with your child on an individual basis

in order to help them in their educational development. I give permission for any necessary diagnostic tests to be carried out with my child.

Parents Signature: _____

I give permission to allow my child's photograph/image to be included in school-related activities, competitions etc.

Parents Signature: _____

I give permission to allow my family details (name, address, date of birth, etc.) to be given to agencies such as HSE (school nurse, doctor, dentist), etc.

Parents Signature: _____

I wish to enrol my child _____

I declare the above information to be correct and understand that it will be treated as confidential.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please ensure that you have included a Birth Certificate with this form. These documents will be photocopied and returned to you.

Principal's signature: _____

Date: _____

Birth Certificate received: Yes No

To be completed if your child is transferring from another Primary School

Previous School: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

What class was your child in when he/she left the school? _____

Have you enclosed a copy of the most recent school report?

Yes No

N.B. All forms: must be completed in full and returned to the school before a new pupil will be enrolled in the school. Proof of address must accompany application.

Enrolment Application Form

Birth Certificate

Note: We require reports from previous schools in order to meet the needs of your child.

Give details of any health conditions (e.g. asthma, eyesight, hearing, allergies, etc.) which may affect your child at school

Are there any specific equipment/ resources that the school will require for your child?
