

SCOIL MHUIRE GAN SMÁL

AUTISM CLASS ENROLMENT POLICY

GLOSSARY

SMGS: Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál

BOM: board of Management

ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder

ASC: Autism Spectrum Condition

HSE: Health Service Executive

NCSE: National Council for Special Education

NEPS: National Educational Psychological Service

AEN: Additional Educational Needs

SENO: Special Education Needs Organiser Community College

1. INTRODUCTION

Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál (SMGS) is a co-educational school. The school functions under the patronage of Cloyne diocese, and a Board of Management (BOM), consisting of four trustee Representatives, two Parents representatives and two staff members who oversee the smooth running of the school.

This policy is set out in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act and the Equal Status Act.

This policy must be read in conjunction with, and is part of the overall Students Admission Policy for Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál.

Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál is dependent on grants and teaching resources provided by the Department of Education and Skill (DES) and this policy shall have regard to these resources and funding.

A new school has been developed for Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál which is due to open in September 2023 and includes provision for special classes for autistic students.

For the academic year 2023/2024 Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál will open two autistic classes for pupils with a diagnosis of autism. For the Academic Year 2024/2025 two further autistic classes will be opened.

The Autism class area, "The Hub" will accommodate 12 students in September 2023, and a further 12 students in September 2024.

The BOM is committed to the successful implementation of recent legislation, in particular the Education Act, 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Equal Status Act 2004 and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) 2004.

The BOM fully subscribes to the principles of partnership, accountability, transparency, inclusion and respect for diversity, parental choice, and equality.

In Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál, we expect all children, and all members of the school community, to find our school a safe and welcoming place, where everyone can achieve success, irrespective of their background. It is not possible to accomplish this if any child, or member of the school community, faces prejudice or hostility because of differences of colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, religion/belief, or language. The Autism classes in "The Hub" will strive to empower students to belong to an educational community without prejudice, and within which individual difference is celebrated.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Essential services are provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE). These services can include Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy or Physiotherapy. The BOM of Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál has no function in accessing these services, but merely acts as a relevant conduit for provision, where available and possible. Furthermore, SMGS cannot guarantee any additional service or support that may have been available to the student through the offices of the HSE. SMGS does not have the resources to follow up on these services and it is a matter for the Parents/Guardians alone to ensure that all such possible support services are being accessed and availed of.

Links with Outside Agencies and Services

The EPSEN Act (2004) assures interlinking provision between the National Council for Special Education Needs (NCSE), The National Education Welfare Board (NEWB), and the Health Executive and school. In accordance with this act, the school will work with the local S.E.N.O, the local N.E.P.S. psychologist, and any other relevant professionals in providing an integrated response to the needs of our students. It may be necessary to hold case meetings with relevant professionals with the permission and knowledge of the student's parents (and their attendance) to determine the best approach and provision for the students in question. Notes from such meetings will be recorded and maintained in the student's file.

Vision

Following consultation with our Special Education Needs Officer (SENO), our National Education Psychological Services (NEPS) Psychologist, our patron, (The Cloyne Diocese), school staff and parents and the DES it was decided that Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál could best facilitate the needs of the community by opening a Special Needs unit which would cater for the needs of students who have Autistic Spectrum Condition. (ASC)

SMGS seeks at all times to provide a caring learning environment where each child is welcomed, respected and cherished and facilitated in reaching their full potential whatever their background, ethnicity, nationality or faith and belief. Our Autism classes in 'The Hub' are an additional support mechanism for students with autism who fulfil the criteria for admission into 'The Hub' and who would find attending a mainstream class on a full time basis challenging.

Our autism classes are run within the overall school and as such form an integral part of the school community. As far as possible, students enrolled in The Hub will be integrated into the day to day activities of the school and, where possible, students will participate in school related activities and events.

One of the aims of 'The Hub' is to integrate the autistic students into the mainstream school community. Accordingly, students will when possible be integrated into appropriate mainstream classes. The rate of this integration will be determined by the professional personnel assigned to the class and the Principal, in consultation with parents/guardians.

Our vision for 'The Hub' is that our students will feel secure and happy in school. Our objectives are to give each student an individualised programme of work, that focuses on both their strengths and difficulties in relation to communication and social skills within a structured and safe environment, thus enabling them to achieve their full potential, and experience a happy and fulfilling school life. Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál is a learning community where the holistic development of each child is paramount. We envisage that The Hub will be a partnership between the students, parents/guardians, staff and the various agencies that link in with the school, and are working on behalf of the students. As such, Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál seeks to ensure that all members of the school community work in partnership, having the best interests of the students and the overall development of the classes in 'The Hub' as a primary objective.

We, the staff of Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál, aim to offer a positive, meaningful educational experience which allows the child to develop to his/her full learning potential in an environment that offers predictability, understanding, calm and support. Our mission statement emphasizes enabling our students to develop their talents to the fullest and providing an atmosphere that promotes self-esteem and respect for others. We see inclusion and integration of all students with ASC as being implicit in this statement, and we are committed to providing a supportive and nurturing learning environment with relevant resources for students with autism spectrum condition.

Mission Statement

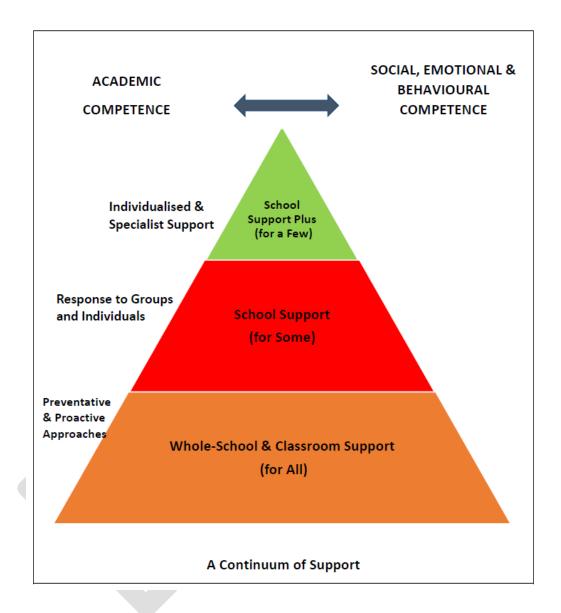
Our mission is to provide special needs units which are welcoming, holistic in their approach, child centred, reflective of current teaching and good practice in relation to pupils with Autistic Spectrum Condition. Our Autistic classes seek to create learning opportunities in a setting of diversity and inclusion. Our Autistic classes cater for the physical, academic, social, and emotional needs of children within the school day in a supportive and caring environment. Our mission is for all pupils attending 'The Hub' to learn to their full potential in a caring, educational, and safe environment.

The Hub aims to:

- Remove/reduce a student's barriers to learning,
- Assist students to develop effective systems of communication and social interaction,
- Develop a student's ability to adapt to, and accommodate change,
- Encourage students to positively manage their own behaviour and difficulties,
- Provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets each student's needs, including access to the Post- Primary School Curriculum,
- Provide an environment that fosters care and monitors and provides interventions for pupils to enhance learning opportunities,
- Provide inclusive opportunities for students to integrate into mainstream as part of the continuum of education provision,

• Work in partnership with parents/carers and other professionals.

The continuum of support model is currently being implemented in Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál, in line with guidelines from the NCSE and NEPs to provide a whole school support system for students.



Students in The Hub are placed in the School Support Plus category and are required to have Personal Pupil Plans and Student Support Files to be completed in consultation with parents, SNAs, teachers and multi-disciplinary teams where possible.

Ethos and Values of 'The Hub'

Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal seeks to provide an environment within which students feel happy, safe and valued. A positive and supportive approach is adopted in addressing the unique and special needs of each of the students. Emphasis is placed upon building on the strengths of the student, thus enabling progression in all aspects of his or her development.

Close liaison with parents and relevant outside agencies affords the opportunity to address the needs of the "whole child." Shared aims and objectives between home and school provide the children with clear and consistent guidelines in terms of behavioural codes and the reinforcement of personal and social skills in a variety of settings.

Students attending our autistic classes are encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-advocacy, and self-discipline. The school plays an active role in promoting these qualities. Through direct intervention and by adult example students are encouraged to develop an awareness and respect for each other, the staff, and their surroundings. Pupils are also encouraged to care for their own belongings and respect those of others, to foster appropriate and socially acceptable forms of behaviour and to take pride in their own strengths and achievements.

Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and, in the long term, develop a sense of self-discipline. In achieving this aim, each child is supported in developing individual strategies and responses to calmly diffuse or manage potentially difficult situations. From a staff perspective emphasis is placed upon recognising and rewarding positive behaviour.

Student Support Plans (SSP) and Behavioural Plans (BP) will be put in place for each child. These will be drawn up in consultation with parents and the relevant outside agencies. All behaviour management programmes are discussed with parents and appropriate strategies, which can be followed both at home and in school, are developed.

Students generally respond well to the structured environment of the school, and it is our aim to manage or modify difficult behaviours. Parents are encouraged to approach the school if they wish to discuss a particular problem. In addition to these plans the school together with parents, will be instrumental in establishing and implementing a code of behaviour for the special needs unit. Students attending the units are treated with dignity and respect and are encouraged to make their own decisions and choices and share ideas and opinions wherever possible.

Approaches to teaching and learning in 'The Hub'

In Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál we believe in an eclectic approach to pupils learning in our ASD Units. This is in accordance with the Department of Education and Skills recommendation. The school will be cognisant of current theories and methods of teaching. Pupils with autism generally display significant difficulties within the 'Triad of Impairment' which is at the heart of autism. These impairments relate to:

- · Difficulties in language and communication,
- Social relationships
- Rigid patterns of behaviour/thought/interests.

These difficulties form major barriers to learning. Our role is to help our pupils to come to terms with, and overcome, as far as possible these difficulties. A modified curriculum will be the guiding education programme with additional emphasis on:

- Behavioural management
- The development of adaptive and independence skills
- Social and communication skills

For the teacher to develop a student support and educational plans, a period of observation and baseline assessment will be necessary.

Code of Behaviour

In keeping with the NEWB guidelines, the school has drawn up a Code of Positive Behaviour. Included in this code of behaviour is the possibility, in certain extreme cases, that a student may be suspended from school or permanently excluded should their behaviour put the safety and welfare of other students and staff members at risk.

All reasonable steps to reduce or prevent such extreme behaviour would be taken prior to considering suspension or expulsion.

Staffing procedures and available places in our ASC Classes for the academic year 2023/2024 and 2024/2025:

In accordance with the regulations as set down by the Department of Education and Skills there are twelve places available for pupils with ASD who fit the criteria for placement in each of our Autism Classes. These will be divided into two classes with a maximum of six students in each class.

A further twelve places will become available when two further classes will open for enrolment for the 2014/2025 academic year.

The school has been allocated 1.5 teachers and two SNAs per class to facilitate teaching and learning and meeting the students' care needs within each special class unit.

Pre Enrolment and Criteria for Enrolment

- 1. All applicants must have an assessed primary diagnosis of Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The assessment must be in line with the established DES criteria of DSM-IV or DSM-V or ICD-10. All applications must be accompanied by an assessment, carried out by an Educational/Clinical Psychologist approved by the DES, and a Multi-Disciplinary assessment report, recommending the applicant as suitable. This report must be current.
- A prospective student for the ASD Unit must have a professional recommendation, from a NEPS Psychologist, Clinical Psychologist, Educational Psychologist, Psychiatrist, or from a multi-disciplinary team (Clinical Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist, Social Worker, and/or Physiotherapist), for placement in an autism specific class.
- All relevant documentation relevant to the student should be provided to the school for assessment by the Admissions Team/Board of Management. The withholding of such reports from the Board of Management may invalidate an enrolment application at any time.
- 4. Parents/Guardians should note that under the official DES guidelines, the number of student places available in 'The Hub' in Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál for the 2023/2024 academic year is a maximum of 12 students. It should be noted that fulfilling the enrolment criteria does not necessarily guarantee the student a place in the ASD class.
- 5. The Board of Management requires that Parents/Guardians must accept that the enrolment process only proceeds where the educational and physical needs of the applicants as identified can be met within the ASD class.
- 6. The Parents/Guardians of the applicant must accept and agree to the Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál Code of Positive Behaviour and the terms of this policy.
- 7. The ASC Hub at Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál will only cater for children that are 12 years or more, and less than 18 years of age, on the 1st of September of the school year in question.
- 8. As inclusion is an integral part of our school ethos, it is a necessary criterion of enrolment that any student attending the unit must be capable of integrating into a mainstream classroom setting. Thus, their level of autism must not prevent the student from interacting appropriately and integrating into the mainstream school.
- 9. Furthermore, the student's cognitive level must allow him/her to integrate academically and socially in the mainstream school setting as well as the ASD unit. The level of integration, duration and timing will be decided upon by the principal and staff of the unit in consultation with the mainstream teacher, external advice, and the parents/guardians of the child in question. Information will be shared and discussed with all parties at meetings.

- 10. Meetings will be held with parents and students seeking admission to the Autism classes to discuss the individual needs of the student. Permission will be sought from parents to visit the student's primary school placement with a view to speaking to staff members about his/her needs, academic / social-development and capabilities. If it is considered from these meetings and conversations that the school can successfully address the student's needs (and the student is capable of meaningful integration both in the Autism class and the mainstream classroom), then the student and family will be invited to the school several times to become accustomed to the school and meet with staff.
- 11. The purpose of all these meetings and conversations is to inform the decision as to whether the Autism class in Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál is an appropriate placement for the child and to facilitate a smooth transition into school if accepted.

Enrolment and Application Process

All applications for enrolment in the ASD Class will be considered within the context of the school's Admission Policy.

- 1. A fully completed application form must be filled in by the parents and any relevant reports must be submitted to the school.
- 2. The completion of an application form does not constitute an offer of a place.
- 3. The child must be age appropriate for the SNU class to which they are applying. Should places become available in our special needs units, the closing date for applications for the 2023/2024 school year is the 21st of October 2022.
- 4. Applicants applying after this date will be placed on a waiting list and will only be considered when all other applications have been processed. The waiting list only applies to the current academic year. In accordance with our school policy on admissions, applications are not retained from year to year and thus, waiting lists from year to year do not apply. If the number of children who satisfy all of the above criteria exceeds the number of places available; the following additional criteria will be used to prioritise children for enrolment. Prioritisation will follow the sequence indicated in the three additional criteria below.

Additional Criteria

- 1. Priority is given to brothers and sisters of children currently attending
- 2. Children living within the catchment area of Blarney parish
- 3. Children in the parishes of Grenagh, Donoughmore, Inniscarra and Clogheen/Kerry Pike
- 4. All other applicants from outside those areas submitted before the closing date
- 5. Late Applicants submitted after the closing date
- All unsuccessful applicants who meet the criteria for enrolment will be placed on a waiting list. Priority on the waiting list will be decided in accordance with the date of registration. Families, whose children are on the waiting list for the 2023/2024 school year, must make a new application for the school year 2024/2025 if they wish their child to be considered for a place in that year.

• All unsuccessful applicants have a right of appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 providing the unit has not reached its full capacity. Registration Procedure for our special needs unit for September, 2023/2024 school year will take place from October 1st 2022. Closing date for applications is Friday 21st October. All applications for places received will be responded to by November 9th in line with general admissions.

Enrolment forms are obtainable from the school secretary at Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál or an online application is available on the school website: **smgsblarney.ie**

Parents/Guardians should note

- 1. It is the duty of the parents/guardians to ensure that the application is accompanied by an original Birth Certificate and two passport size photographs.
- 2. Application only does not guarantee a place in the special needs unit.
- 3. Decisions in relation to applications for enrolment are made by the senior in-school management team and endorsed by the BOM in accordance with the enrolment policy.
- 4. Return of Forms of Acceptance Letters of offer for places in the special needs unit will be made by post. All completed acceptance forms must be returned to the school according to the dates as per Admission Notice. If the school does not receive this documentation by the nominated closing date, the Management will assume that the place is not being accepted and the place will be offered to the next suitable candidate.
- 5. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing by post. All unsuccessful applicants have a right of appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 providing the unit has not reached its full capacity. There will be an introductory meeting for parents of incoming children to 'The Hub' prior to entry.
- 6. The advice, support and recommendation of the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) for the area/region, based on the needs of the applicants, will be considered in the decision making process associated with enrolment of applicants in the Autism classes in 'The Hub' in Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál.
- 7. It is important that Parents/Guardians note that Scoil Mhuire gan Smál may, in certain clarified circumstances and following an assessment and investigation, be unable to meet the special educational or physical needs of the applicant on the grounds that (i) the applicant is deemed a risk, on health, safety, welfare or security grounds to themselves and/or other, or (ii) admission of the applicant will make impossible, or have a serious detrimental effect on, the education provision by Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál as an educational establishment of its services to other.
- 8. All recommendations will then be considered by the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál who make the final school decisions on all applications to enrol.
- 9. The Parents/Guardians of a child being offered a place in the ASD Unit will be invited to visit the school to meet with a member of the Hub's Coordination team and the Principal/Deputy Principal of the school, to discuss the placement/enrolment of their child. Any information requested by the Parent/Guardian will be provided at this meeting.
- 10. The Parents/Guardians may be requested to consent to a visit by a member of the Hub's Coordination teams professional staff at Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál, to visit the existing school placement of the student concerned in order to observe the student in a

- classroom situation. Staff will also meet with the principal and any relevant personnel involved in the student's education to that point.
- 11. The Parents/ Guardians will be invited to accompany their child to visit Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál and The Hub and meet staff subject to completion dates for construction of the Hub
- 12. The Parents/ Guardians are also invited, after the acceptance and placement of their child in The Hub, to be consulted about the Student Support Plan for their child.
- 13. The NEPS psychologist and SENO will be appraised of the Student Support Plan.
- 14. A student may be phased gradually into the Autism Class in 'The Hub' through a mutually agreed process between Parents/Guardians and the Management of the school.
- 15. Where it is deemed appropriate, a student in 'The Hub' will be assigned to an age appropriate mainstream class for integration purposes by school management.
- 16. Students that are currently enrolled in an Autism Class in another post-primary school will not be considered for transfer enrolment at 'The Hub' in Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál during the course of the school academic year unless a space becomes available and all normal access criteria are fullfilled
- 17. Students enrolled in an ASD Unit in Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal will not be considered for transfer enrolment at 'The Hub' in Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal at the end of a school academic year unless the family have moved residence into the catchment area and there is available space.
- 18. Parents/Guardians must note Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál respects the rights of the existing school community and the students already enrolled therein, and this consideration is paramount when assessing entry to the Autistic Classes in 'The Hub'.
- 19. The placement of every student within an ASD Unit will be subject to regular review by the school staff and where appropriate the professional services external to the school, following which decisions will (i) continue within the ASD Unit at Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal School (ii) integrate fully into the mainstream post-primary, or (iii) seek an alternative and more appropriate educational placement for the student as Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál is unable to meet the educational needs of the student. In such an instance the support and assistance of the staff at Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál will be available to assist the family in securing a more suitable learning environment in another educational institution, for the student concerned.

Equality of access

No child is refused admission for reasons of religion/ belief, language, gender, social status, ethnicity, or political beliefs & values. However, all children attending the unit must have the potential to integrate into the mainstream setting. It is also a criterion of enrolment that the special needs unit can meet the child's individual needs in a meaningful way. This policy is subject to regular review by the Board of Management before the start of the enrolment process each year.

Signed:		
Fr Michael Fitzgerald		

Appendix 1:

School Mission Statement, Aims and Ethos

Our school concentrates on the development of the whole person, by providing for the religious, moral, social, physical and intellectual growth of our students. We strive for academic excellence, while fostering, and encouraging all types of talent. Our Catholic students are formed in the principles and practices of the Catholic Faith, but the school welcomes students of other persuasions. Our school is open to all except to those whose presence would put the welfare of other students seriously at risk. The Religious Education of students is, and is seen to be, of fundamental importance. This is reflected in the curriculum of the school, in time-tabling, assignment of teachers and provision of resources. Communal prayer and liturgical celebration are an integral part of school life. Compassion and co-operation are given a higher value in our school than competition. The value of work, as participation in God's creative power, is stressed. We aim to develop sound work habits and appropriate leisure interests in such a way that students are prepared for later employment and the challenges of an ever-changing society. We press ahead to make positive discrimination in favour of disadvantaged children a reality. Teachers, students, administrative, cleaning and ancillary staff are all members of the school community. A sense of mutual respect among all members of the school community is encouraged. We encourage good relationships between home and school, recognising this as essential to the educational process. We endorse a comprehensive view of Education that takes account of the role of the family, the community, the mass media, the school and the professions Appendix 2:

Catchment Area Ethos, Vision and Mission Statement of Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál

Our vision for our school is to provide a welcoming, caring environment where all members of the school community are valued and treated with respect and dignity. We believe that children learn to the best of their ability when they feel happy and secure in school. The school seeks to develop a sense of community and partnership with children, parents, and staff. At all times the school tries to provide a high standard of education and to promote the full and harmonious development of the child. We believe that every member of the school community has an integral part to play in the development and overall wellbeing of the school. The school is committed to a spirit of inclusion, equality, and partnership in education. It is the policy of Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal to respect, celebrate and recognise diversity in all aspects of human life. Children attending Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal are taught and encouraged to view diversity as something which reflects the community in which they are living and Ireland's increasingly multi-cultural society.

The school encourages the children committed to its care to have a pride in what makes them different and a belief that difference when respected and valued gives strength and vibrancy to the total school community and the wider community in which they live. Our mission is to provide a new model of post primary education that reflects Ireland in the 21st Century. Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal provides a welcome to each child in the community we serve and creates learning opportunities in a setting of diversity and inclusion. Our school caters for the physical, academic, social, and emotional needs of children within the school day in a supportive and caring environment.

Aims and Objectives of Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál

- ♣ To provide a high standard of education in a school atmosphere that recognises the cultural, ethnic and diverse religious beliefs of the pupils. Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal will endeavour to emphasise and enhance cultural activities, music and sport.
- ♣ To support and encourage the pupils of Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal to enhance and positively shape the future of Irish society.
- ♣ To ensure that the pupils, parents and staff feel happy and secure in our school and that every individual is valued as an integral part of the school community.
- ♣ To help the children develop a strong sense of self-confidence, self-belief and selfrespect and that they will respect and value others.
- ♣ That through good communication and involvement, the school will make every effort to bridge the gap between school and home.
- ♣ To develop a school community which is welcoming to parents, children, staff and friends of the school.
- ♣ To ensure that all members of the school community should be treated with empathy, dignity and respect.

LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY AND POLICY CONTEXT

This policy has been prepared in the context of the following legislation, regulations, guidance and policies: Education Act, 1998 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (EPSEN), 2004 Education for Persons with Disabilities Act, 2004 Equal Status Act, 2000 Child Care Act, 1991 Data Protection Acts, 1988 & 2003 DES Circular Letter 56/11 Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process (NCSE) Inclusive Education Framework — A guide for Schools on the Inclusion of Pupils with Special Educational Needs (NCSE) Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools (NEPS) Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities (NCCA) Moving Up: The Experiences of First Year Students in Post-Primary Education (NCCA) Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal Enrolment and Admissions Policy Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal Pastoral Care Policy Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal Homework Policy Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal Guidance Plan In addition the policy is informed by a range of resources available on the NCSE, PDST, NBSS and NCCA websites POLICY REVIEW This policy will be review on a consultative basis with the relevant stakeholders. It will be reviewed annually.

This policy was passed by the BOM or	n
Signed	Date
The policy will be reviewed each year	at the September BOM Meeting
Signed	Date

