

Jonah Special School

School for Children with Autism & Complex Needs

OLD V.E.C. BUILDING, SLIEVERUE, KILKENNY, VIA WATERFORD

www.jonahschool.ie

Tel/Fax: 051-833269 Email: thejonahproject@hotmail.com

Roll Number – 20380B

Principal: Caitriona Barry

Director: Niamh McEvoy BCBA



TRANSITION POLICY

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Transition Policy Jonah Special School

Introduction

The staff, Board of Management and parents of Jonah Special School have developed and agreed this policy in line with the current requirements, recommendations and guidelines relating to planning and preparation for new students transitioning into Jonah Special School, existing students moving class from year to year and students leaving to move to another school/adult placement.

Aims

- ✚ To meet the requirements of The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (sections 9 and 15).
- ✚ To follow the NCSE *Guidelines on the Individual Planning Process*.
- ✚ To set out the procedures followed by Jonah Special School for the purposes of planning for the transition of new students joining the school.
- ✚ To set out the procedures followed by Jonah Special School for the purposes of planning for the transition of existing students from year to year.
- ✚ To set out the procedures followed by Jonah Special School for the purposes of planning for and supporting school leavers in their transition to their new school.

Rationale

Transitions occur when students transfer from their existing environment to a new one. Jonah Special School recognises that this is an event that can have a significant impact on children with autism. Transitions occur for students entering the school, for students leaving to attend another school or adult placement, or for our existing students as they move classes.

New Intake

New students may have previously been in another school, either mainstream or special class, or pre-school, either specialised or otherwise, and their special needs have been identified in that environment. It is the case, however, that wherever students have been prior to Jonah Special School, all new students must supply the school with a psychological assessment report and any other formal assessments, which, together with reports from previous

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placements will form the basis for the development of a student profile identifying priority needs.

Some children may have not yet experienced the classroom environment. It is the case, however, that wherever students have been prior to Jonah Special School, the staff and management are committed to applying a child-centred approach to planning and supporting the transition of new students into their new school environment. Please see SEN Policy for further information on accommodations made to meet the diverse learning needs of each child.

Existing Students

Jonah Special School also recognises the importance of planning to meet the needs of existing students as they progress through the school. This is particularly important for children with autism and essential for a smooth introduction to the new school year. The hand-over of written information, (individual education plans, end of year reports, etc.) meetings and the co-operative teaching approach all contribute to the ease of transition of existing students from class to class. Where possible, children will be given the opportunity to visit the new class and participate in lessons with the existing cohort before the date of actual transition. Children profiles will be updated and shared at the end of each school year during multi-disciplinary meetings to ensure continuity of approach.

Supporting School Leavers

Jonah Special School is committed to planning and supporting students as they transition to a new school environment or adult placement and enable students to make the adjustment to new surroundings, new people etc. When the student reaches their final year, the transition plan will be discussed with parents as part of the IEP process. This will involve liaising with the new placement as required and may also involve making visits to the new school in order to assess what supports may be necessary in order for the child to be successful. Where possible, students may be accompanied by a staff member, although this is dependent on the needs of the child and the availability of resources, and is not guaranteed. Transition plans will be individualised, and will be approached on a case by case basis.

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Supporting New Students

The following is an outline of how new students joining Jonah Special School are planned for and supported in the early stages of the new school year.

- ✚ Parents and student will be invited into school for an informal visit, during which time the student will be informally observed spending time in the environment, interactions, preferences for activities and toys.
- ✚ Principal, Director and Class Teacher will meet with Parents to ascertain the most appropriate class placement for the student. The purpose of this is to ensure the balanced composition of each class and also to allow for planning for individual needs in advance of the new school year.
- ✚ Parents will receive a New Parent Information Pack to assist them in making preparations at home for their child's transition prior to the start of term. As part of this information pack, parents will receive the following contents –
 - Introductory letter to new parents.
 - General information about the school.
 - Teaching strategies and methodologies.
 - Social story/photo book for preparing the student for beginning new school as appropriate.
 - Jonah Special Schools Code of Behaviour Policy.
 - Transition questionnaire and sensory questionnaire to fill in and return to school.
 - School Calendar.
 - Request for family photographs.
 - Photo permission form.
 - Community Outings Permission form.
 - Permission for transfer of pertinent documents from relevant professionals.

Permission is granted by parents for Jonah Special School to discuss their student with any school or pre-school that they may currently attend. The Principal will initiate contact with professionals from the previous placement and, for the purposes of further discussion, a follow-up telephone call and/or meeting will be initiated by the new class teacher and/or Director from Jonah.

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Parents will be asked to fill in a questionnaire in order to begin to develop a picture of the incoming student. Areas covered by the questionnaire are as follows –

- Language and communication – strategies and difficulties.
- Teaching strategies and methodologies used to date.
- Toileting needs.
- Additional personal care needs.
- Personal interests/motivators.
- Behaviour triggers.
- Independence/application to work.
- Sensory – based sensitivities.
- Water/swimming experience

The beginning of the school year is structured to accommodate our students in making the transition into the new school environment. The first two weeks of the new school year are designed to allow students the time and space to make the adjustment to their new school and class, and to allow for any phased transition programmes which have been devised to facilitate the student. The activities planned by the class teacher are designed to support students in this process and to enable the class team to become familiar with the student and build relationships at this early stage. This lays the foundation for the second two weeks of the first term, during which period the class teacher will conduct the necessary formative assessment on each student in the class. The outcomes of these assessments will identify priority needs, and will, after consultation with parents, form the basis of the Individual Education Plan (IEP). Further details of the Jonah Special School's Assessment & Reporting Policy are contained in the relevant policy document.

Moving Classes

- ✚ Class teachers will complete an end of year assessment on each student in their class.
- ✚ Class teacher and new class teacher for the coming school year will meet to discuss the individual needs of each student.
- ✚ The relevant documentation (individual education plan, end of year report and end of year assessment) will be shared and will help to inform this meeting.

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Supporting School Leavers

After school leavers have accepted a place at their new placement, the Principal, Director and class teacher will liaise with new schools or adult services in the following ways –

- ✚ Principal, Director and class teachers may meet with new school or adult services representatives to discuss the individual needs of each student.
- ✚ Visual supports will be devised to ensure that as far as possible, each student knows what will happen.
- ✚ Initial visits will be arranged to the new placement, where possible a member of staff will accompany.
- ✚ If appropriate class teachers will enable students to complete a workbook 'My New School or Placement' as preparation for transition.
- ✚ A photo book of new school or placement will be compiled for sharing at home and in school.

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Transition Policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Jonah Special School at its meeting held on:

Ratified by the Jonah Board of Management on: _____
Date

Signed: _____
Principal

Signed: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Next Review Period: *November 2023*

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Appendix A

Questionnaire for New Parents

If you could tell me five things that you think I need to know about your child, what would they be?

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How does your child communicate at home? How do they ask for food or a favourite activity?

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How does your child express frustration?

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How does your child entertain themselves at home? What are they doing when they are most relaxed?

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What games and leisure activities does your child enjoy?

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Does your child have any special interests?

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Does your child have any dietary requirements or food allergies?

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If the whole class is having an edible treat do you wish your child to participate or would you rather an alternative was found?

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What sort of chores and responsibilities does your child have at home and how independently does he/she do these? What would you like to see him/her able to do?

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How does your child communicate his/her needs?

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Has your child been introduced to specific methods of teaching suitable for children with autism?

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Does your child have care needs in relation to toileting?

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Does your child have care needs in relation to food/eating?

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Can you provide any additional information regarding triggers for behaviour?

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Can your child work independently, and if so for approximately how long?

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Can your child sit for group sessions, and if so for approximately how long?

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Do you have any additional comments to assist in the transition of the child into Jonah Special School?

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Thank you for your co-operation in completing this questionnaire.