



Enrolment Policy

Rationale

All Department of Education Training (DET) policies and protocols apply to enrolment processes at Northern School for Autism. Given the unique nature of the school and the high demand for places, this policy provides protocols for priority enrolment consideration; it also provides guiding principles should the demand for places exceed available spaces.

NSA supports inclusion and encourages all families explore mainstream enrolment options for their child. NSA works with the North Western Victoria Region, mainstream schools and students' families to support integration and inclusion for students with autism. *Please refer to our Integration and Inclusion and Diversity Policies for more information.*

Eligibility for Admission

To be eligible for admission, students must have a diagnosis of autism by a multi-disciplinary team and be eligible for funding under the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) criteria of the Department's Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD).

The criteria includes:

A diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder; (by Paediatrician/Child Psychiatrist, a Psychologist and a Speech Pathologist)

AND

B Significant deficits in adaptive behaviour established by a composite score of two standard deviations or more below the mean on an approved standardised test of adaptive behaviours;

AND

C Significant deficits in language skills established by a comprehensive speech pathology assessment demonstrating language skills equivalent to a composite score of two standard deviations or more below the mean.

For further information please refer to the Department website:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/psd.aspx>

- Students must be at least five (5) years of age, by 30th of April of the year in which admission is sought.
- The student must be an Australian citizen or hold appropriate visas. Information regarding enrolment of overseas students may be obtained from the International Studies Unit (03) 9637 2202.
- As of 2021, Students must reside within the North Western Victoria Region (NWVR) of the Department and the corresponding Designated Transport Area (DTA) to be eligible for a place.
- As an enrolment ceiling is in operation (as approved by the NWV Director), students whom are eligible to enrol and for whom NSA is deemed the most suitable school will be placed on a prospective enrolment list.

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<http://www.northernautism.vic.edu.au>

Enrolment Process

On receipt of an enrolment enquiry the student will be added to the data base of Prospective Students (Waiting List). At an availability of placement/s, the parent/guardian will be directed book a place in a school tour via the Enrolment Coordinator.

Tours are run by the Principal and Leadership Team, at which an information pack will be provided for those seeking possible enrolment. This will include:

- a. Prospective Enrolment Student Information Form (Timeline)
- b. A Prospective Enrolment Student Information Form (Procedure and Criteria)
- c. A copy of the Enrolment Policy
- d. A NSA prospectus
- e. Other relevant school documents.

This is reviewed annually and may include (but is not limited to):

- NSA Teaching and Learning Protocols
- NSA School Rules
- Therapy services information etc.

Transfer Students

If the prospective student is already eligible for PSD-Autism, a transfer to NSA will be considered, providing NSA is deemed the most suitable educational pathway for the student, a place is available, and they live within the DTA.

If the prospective student has not yet been deemed eligible for PSD-Autism and is already enrolled in a State Government mainstream school, the mainstream school is responsible for coordinating the PSD application. If the student is not enrolled in a State Government mainstream school, the prospective student must enrol at the mainstream school closest to their home and the mainstream school will be responsible for coordinating the PSD application.

Foundation (Prep) Students

Prospective foundation students will be placed on a prospective enrolment list. Parents (usually with the support of their Early Childhood Intervention Services) need to provide the assessments listed in Eligibility for Admission in this policy. If assessments are required, students may be referred to an NWVR psychologist or speech therapist (the SSSO network) for the student to be assessed and eligibility determined. This takes place through a local mainstream primary school.

Enrolments are not activated until the PSD-Autism application is approved and a place is confirmed. If the process is not completed by the end of the academic year, or in time for the Prep Orientation Sessions, a provisional place may be offered until one can be confirmed.

As part of the PSD application process a Student Support Group (SSG) is formed and an Education Needs Questionnaire meeting (ENQ) completed. NSA will run this SSG ENQ on behalf of the family; however it may also be completed at the local primary school if preferred. These will take place only when all documentation is received and deemed acceptable, and commence from September each year. Membership of the SSG is as follows: parent/carer, parent advocate/Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) key worker, principal or delegate and a Department representative. The ENQ summary page and supporting documentation are then forwarded to the Student Wellbeing Branch of the Department. A Department panel determines eligibility for PSD. Following the determination of the panel the school is then notified of the decision regarding the

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application. If the student is deemed eligible for the PSD, the enrolment may proceed providing NSA is deemed the most suitable educational pathway and a place is available.

Foundation (Prep) students participate in the Orientation Program in November/December of the year before they commence school. Transition Programs will be negotiated for students transferring across school settings.

Designated Transport Area (DTA)

Students who attend Northern School for Autism for a minimum of three days a week and live within the Designated Transport Area (DTA), are eligible to travel to and from school on school contract buses if there are available seats.

Parents/Carers of students who live outside the DTA will be referred to their nearest Specialist School. Of the parents then choose to enrol their child at NSA they will be responsible for the transport of their child to and from school. Students who live within four kilometres of the school are not guaranteed access to school contracted buses.

Student Support Group

The Student Support Group will monitor and evaluate students' educational needs/accompanying program. The Student Support Group represents a partnership in the educational planning process between the parents/carers, the student and the school.

Program for Students with Disabilities Funding Review

Once a student has been accepted into the PSD program, the resources allocated accompany the student until DET mandatory funding review at 11 or 12 years of age (year 6 approximately).

Priority Enrolment

Priority enrolment is given to siblings of current NSA student and that fit the criteria.

Enrolment Review

Students enrolling at NSA do not necessarily remain at the school for the entire length of their school education. Student enrolment is reviewed if/when needed in consultation with families in SSG meetings determine if NSA remains the most suitable educational pathway. If it is deemed that a student would benefit to a greater extent from programs in an alternate setting, including mainstream, specialist or SDS schools, this recommendation will be made to parents/carers and we will work in collaboration to determine the best educational pathway for students at any given time.

Enrolment is reviewed over time:

- to ensure each student is accessing the most beneficial and relevant educational program;
- to ensure each student is continuing to benefit from the autism specific educational environment and programs;
- to ensure as many places as possible are available for students in need, who have not accessed the program and would benefit from the program.
- to promote inclusion and ensure that wherever possible students are supported to participate in a mainstream educational pathway.

EVALUATION

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years as part of the NSA policy review cycle

This policy was last updated May 2021 and is scheduled for review in May 2024.

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