



## Enrolment Policy

### BACKGROUND

Northern School for Autism provides educational programs for students with disability and high needs who have autism.

By law in Victoria all children from the age of 6 up until they turn 17 years must be enrolled at a registered school or registered for home schooling unless they have a reasonable excuse. School participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with a comprehensive educational program and access to support networks. It also helps to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and active participation in their local community.

Specialist schools, including Northern School for Autism, have been established to cater for the specific educational needs of students with a disability or with additional needs. Under State and Federal discrimination law, specialist schools are permitted to set specific enrolment criteria and to not enrol students who do not meet these criteria.

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to specify the enrolment criteria for students seeking enrolment at Northern School for Autism and the evidence required to support applications for enrolment.

It is intended to provide clarity for the local community on the enrolment criteria and ensure a smooth and supported transition for enrolling students.

### Scope

Enrolment at Northern School for Autism is based on a student's disability and associated educational needs. Subject to capacity, student intake may be at any stage of the year, providing the student is of school age and satisfies the eligibility criteria. All applications for enrolment at Northern School for Autism require regional approval.

### ENROLMENT CRITERIA

The following enrolment criteria have been specified and approved by the Regional Director, North West Victoria Region (as the Minister's delegate) under section 2.2.16(b) of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic).

The enrolment criteria have been determined based on the identified education needs of students in the community. A student's enrolment will be reviewed periodically in line with their needs.

Students seeking to enrol must have:

#### *Autism Spectrum Disorder*

- A. A diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder;  
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 behaviour (for example a Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales composite score of 70 or below);  
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

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mean, (for example a core language score of 70 or below on one of the recommended comprehensive language tests).

- 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 an enrolment ceiling is in operation (as approved by the NWVR 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.

### Transfer Students

If a 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. The student will be placed on a prospective enrolment list if a place is not immediately available.

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 Enrolment Criteria 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.

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.

Applications from students who do not meet the above criteria will be considered on a case-by- case basis by the region, in consultation with the Principal, in consideration of the student's education and support needs. The Regional Director, North West Victoria Region must approve enrolments for students who do not meet the eligibility criteria.

## **PRIORITY ORDER OF PLACEMENT**

In circumstances where the school may not have sufficient accommodation to be able to accept all applications from eligible students, the school will manage enrolment applications in accordance with the following priority order of placement:

1. Students with a sibling at the same permanent address who are attending the school at the same time.
2. Students who reside nearest to the school. [Getting to and from school for students with disability | Victorian Government](#)

The school must ensure that all applicants eligible under the first criterion have been offered a place before moving to consideration of the second criterion.

### **Verification of permanent address**

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When assessing enrolment applications under the priority order of placement, Northern School for Autism may ask for supporting documentation to assist them in verifying a student's permanent residence.

Northern School for Autism may request original or certified copies of rental agreements, unconditional contracts of sale or other official documentation that demonstrates permanent residence.

Documents should show the same address and parent's/carer's name as recorded on the school enrolment application form.

The school may also make the following enquiries to verify the information provided:

- a) checking the electoral roll at an Australian Electoral Commission office or the Victorian Electoral Commission head office
- b) checking with a real estate agent to confirm a rental address
- c) for a rental property which is a studio apartment or a one-bedroom unit, checking whether there are any regulations/codes limiting the occupancy of these apartments to one person per apartment.

The enrolment application may be unsuccessful if, after reasonable enquiries, the Principal is unable to verify that the evidence provided is genuine and valid. Applicants may then seek to appeal the decision according to the Appeal process outlined below.

### **Enrolment on compassionate grounds**

In exceptional circumstances, a student seeking enrolment at Northern School for Autism who meets the enrolment criteria may be approved by the Regional Director North West Victoria outside of the priority order of placement, based on compassionate grounds. This is an overarching consideration and does not form part of the priority order of placement. Further advice and support when considering applications on compassionate grounds is available on the [Policy and Advisory Library](#) and from regional staff.

## **EVIDENCE AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS**

To support a student's application for enrolment, the following evidence and supporting information should be provided:

### *Autism Spectrum Disorder*

A diagnosis provided by professionals with experience and knowledge in the assessment of Autism Spectrum Disorder that includes:

- a) a comprehensive report from a child psychiatrist or paediatrician;
- b) a signed report from a psychologist providing an assessment of adaptive behaviour (not more than 12 months old);
- c) a signed report from a speech pathologist containing a comprehensive speech pathology assessment (not more than 12 months old) and where appropriate, an occupational therapist.

The Department provides assessment services to support specialist schools in determining whether the student meets their enrolment criteria. Department regional offices also play a role in supporting specialist schools with enrolment processes.

**NOTE: Enrolment applications may not be successful if the requested documentation is not provided or invalid.**

## **ENROLMENT REVIEW**

### **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

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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.

#### **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).

### **APPEAL PROCESS**

Parents/carers can appeal against the decision not to approve an enrolment. This can occur in relation to enrolments at any age or year level. Further information on appeals can be found at [Enrolment: Enrolment in specialist schools | education.vic.gov.au](http://enrolment.education.vic.gov.au).

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

The Northern School for Autism’s enrolment policy will be made available to the school community on the school’s website.

### **POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

Policy approved by	Principal on 4 <sup>th</sup> May 2023
Next scheduled review date	4 <sup>th</sup> May 2026 <i>note that this policy should be reviewed every 3-4 years or more often if required</i>

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