

## **BACKGROUND**

Southern Autistic School provides educational programs for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

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 Southern Autistic School (SAS) 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 enroll students who do not meet these criteria.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to specify the enrolment criteria for students seeking enrolment at Southern Autistic School 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 SAS 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.

## **ENROLMENT CRITERIA**

The following enrolment criteria have been specified and approved by the Regional Director, South Eastern Region 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 (made by either a psychiatrist or a paediatrician); 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 Teacher Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scale 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 mean, (for example a core language score of 70 or below on one of the recommended comprehensive language tests administered by a Speech Pathologist).

## **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.

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**

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

SAS 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 Southern Autistic School who meets the enrolment criteria may be approved by the Regional Director, South Eastern Victoria Region, 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 (Teacher Vineland) 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.

In order to meet the special school verification for Southern Autistic School, the following are accepted assessments:

- Preschool Language Scale – Australia and New Zealand Language Adaptation – Fifth Edition (PLS-5) for children aged from 0 years to 7 years 11 months
- Test of Early Language Development – Fourth Edition (TELD-4) for children aged from 3 years to 7 years 11 months
- Test of Early Language Development – Third Edition (TELD-3) for children aged from 2 years to 7 years 11 months (accepted until 31 December 2019)
- Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals – Preschool – Second Edition, Australian Standardised Edition (CELF-P2 Australian) for children aged from 3 years to 6 years 11 months
- Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals – Fifth Edition, Australian and New Zealand (CELF-5 A&NZ) for students aged from 5 years to 21 years
- Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals – Fourth Edition, Australian Standardised Edition (CELF-4 Australian) for students aged from 5 years to 21 years (accepted until December 2019)
- Test of Language Development – Primary – Fourth Edition (TOLD-P:4) for children aged from 4 years to 8 years 11 months
- Test of Language Development – Intermediate – Fourth Edition (TOLD-I:4) for students aged from 8 years to 17 years 11 months
- Comprehensive Assessment of Spoken Language Second Edition (CASL-2) for children aged 3 years to 21 years.
- Comprehensive Assessment of Spoken Language (CASL) for children aged 3 years to 21 years. Please note the processing index scores (receptive and expressive) can only be calculated for students aged 7 years to 10 years 11 months (accepted until December 2019)

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.

### **APPEAL PROCESS**

Parents/carers can appeal against the decision not to approve an enrolment. This can occur in relation to enrolments at any age level. Parents or carers seeking to appeal a specialist school's enrolment decision should lodge a written appeal with the school. The Department will contact parents/carers with further information after an appeal is lodged.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

The Southern Autistic School enrolment policy will be made available to the school community on the school's website.

### **POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

Policy reviewed	October 2023
Approved by	Regional Director, South Eastern Victoria Region
Next scheduled review date	August 2025