



Learning Support/Special Educational Needs Policy

Introduction

This policy was drawn up in consultation with the staff, parents and Board of Management of St. John the Apostle, Knocknacarra NS. This policy is informed by the Learning Support Guidelines 2000 and Special Education Circular 0013/2017, Guidelines for Primary Schools - Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs.

Rationale of Policy

This policy was drawn up in order to

- Ensure that supports provided to children with special educational needs should be based on identified needs rather than primarily on diagnosis of disability and be informed by regular reviews of progress (in consultation with parents and children) as outlined in the Continuum of Support Guidelines
- Support children with identified special educational needs, including children for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL)
- Ensure that children with the greatest levels of need should have access to the greatest level of support, and whenever possible, these children should be supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support
- Provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and interested persons on the provision of effective special education teaching to children experiencing low achievement and/ or learning difficulties
- Fulfil our obligations under the Education Act 1998, Equal Status Act 2000, Education Welfare Act 2000 and Education for Persons with Disabilities Act 2004
- Ensure that children with special educational needs can participate in all activities in the school ensuring an inclusive learning environment

This policy covers the area of Special Needs Education, specifically catered for by our SET (Special Education Teachers) and supported by our SNAs (Special Needs Assistants).

Aims of Policy

This policy aims to:

- Develop self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning
- Encourage children to monitor their own learning and strive towards independence
- Work in partnership with parents in supporting their children's learning
- Promote cooperation between class teachers, SET and parents in the implementation of the SEN programme.

Roles & Responsibilities

Board of Management

The role of the Board of Management is to:

- Ensure the development of a Learning Support/Special Educational needs policy for the school
- Review periodically the implementation of the policy and change policy based on the review
- Ensure adequate resources are provided for the SET
- Ensure data collected is stored in a secure facility
- Budget for ongoing support for Professional Development in SEN for staff.

Parents

Collaboration and sharing of relevant information between teachers and parents is of critical importance where children experience learning difficulties. Parents contribute through:

- Regular communication with the class teacher and SET in line with IEP/IPLP programme as appropriate
- Creating a home environment conducive to learning
- Fostering positive attitudes about school and learning in the child
- Consultation in relation to their child's strengths and needs and the supports and strategies being developed to support their child.
- The Continuum of Support process and the Student Support File to provide and build a collaborative approach to identifying and responding to the needs of children with special educational needs.
- Consultation when developing and reviewing policies relating to the education of children with special educational needs.

The Principal and Deputy Principal

The principal/deputy principal has overall responsibility for the operation of the school's SEN and the operation of services for children with special educational needs.

The Deputy Principal will;

- Oversee the implementation of a whole school assessment and screening programme to identify children with very low achievement and/or learning difficulties
- Monitor the selection of children for supplementary teaching
- Keep teachers informed about the external assessment services (e.g. National Educational Psychological Services NEPS) that are available and the procedures to be followed in initiating referrals
- Maintain a list of children who are receiving supplementary teaching
- Support the implementation of a tracking system at whole school level to monitor the progress of children with learning difficulties
- Facilitate communication between class teachers and parents of children in receipt of supplementary teaching
- Support the professional development of class teachers and SETs by encouraging them to attend courses and/or avail of support services.

Class Teacher

- Has first-line responsibility for the education of all children in his/her class.
- Should implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate meaningful inclusion of children with special educational needs
- Engage in evidence-informed teaching and classroom management approaches
- Use universal screening and assessment approaches

- Will make appropriate modifications to teaching approaches and expected learning outcomes for children with learning difficulties to include co-operative teaching, collaborative problem-solving activities, heterogeneous group work, differentiation, interventions to promote social and emotional competence and embedding ICT in teaching, learning and assessment
- Will ensure consultation and collaboration between class teachers, SET and parents to facilitate planning of Individual Profiles and Learning Programmes (IPLPs) and Individual Educational Plans (IEPs)
- Facilitate fortnightly planning meetings between class teacher and SET and twice yearly at the beginning and end of each instructional term

Special Education Teacher (SET)

The principal aim of SET is to optimise the teaching and learning process for children with learning difficulties. More specifically they aim that each child will have adequate levels of proficiency in the following before leaving school:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Social and emotional literacy
- Physical skills
- Sensory development
- Language communication skills.

The main role of SET will be;

- (i) the provision of supplementary teaching to children who have been identified and selected for additional support teaching
- (ii) to support the class teachers in providing for children with learning difficulties
- (iii) to develop and promote whole school strategies in the areas of literacy, numeracy and social emotional teaching.

Teaching approaches will include a combination of team-teaching, co-operative teaching, early intervention and small group or individual support.

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

The duties of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) are assigned by the Principal/Deputy Principal. These duties will involve tasks of a non-teaching nature, such as:

- **Assistance with feeding:** where a child with special needs requires adult assistance
- **Administration of medicine:** where a child requires adult assistance to administer medicine
- **Assistance with toileting and general hygiene:** (including catheterisation) where a child with special needs cannot independently self-toilet, and until such time as they are able to do so
- **Assistance with mobility and orientation:** on an ongoing basis including assisting a child or children to access the school, the classroom, with accessing school transport or helping a child to avoid hazards in or surrounding the school
- **Assisting teachers to provide supervision in the class, playground and school grounds:** at recreation, assembly, and dispersal times including assistance with arriving and departing from school for children with special needs
- **Non-nursing care needs associated with specific medical conditions:** such as diabetes, epilepsy etc
- **Care needs requiring frequent interventions including withdrawal of a child from a classroom for movement breaks when essential:** This may be for safety or

personal care reasons, or where a child may be required to leave the class for medical reasons or due to distress on a frequent basis

- **Assistance with moving and lifting of children, operation of hoists and equipment**
- **Assistance with severe communication difficulties including enabling curriculum access for children with physical disabilities or sensory needs** and those with significant, and identified social and emotional difficulties. Under the direction of the teacher, this might include assistance with assistive technology equipment, typing or handwriting, supporting transition, assisting with supervision at recreation, dispersal times
- Preparation and tidying up of rooms in which children are being taught
- Assisting in out-of-school visits, walks and similar activities.

To support and assist a child to become independent and responsible, the duties of the SNA may be modified as appropriate in the classroom.

The Principles of SEN are:

- (i) **Effective whole-school policies and parental involvement**
- (ii) **Prevention Strategies**
- (iii) **Provision of intensive early intervention**
- (iv) **Direction of resources towards children in greatest need**

These principles encompass the 5 elements of

- 1. Inclusion**
- 2. Whole School Approaches**
- 3. Identifying Needs**
- 4. Meeting Needs**
- 5. Monitoring Needs**

(i) Effective Whole School Policies

- The provision of special education teaching is planned to work in conjunction with the regular class teaching in literacy, numeracy, social and emotional literacy, physical, sensory and language communication difficulties.
- Whole school approaches are agreed in the areas of Phonics (Newell Programme), PM Reading Programme, Comprehension Strategies (Building Bridges of Understanding), TSI (Transactional Strategies Instruction), First Steps Writing and Reading Resources, Ready Set Go Maths, Whole School Problem Solving Packs, Incredible Years Behaviour Management Programme, Friends for Life and Mind Up.
- Effort is made to ensure that children who are withdrawn for special education teaching do not miss out on other curricular areas.
- The provision of special education teaching may include withdrawal of children from their classroom in a group, individual sessions and/or in-class tuition
- In-class support will be jointly designed and monitored by the Class Teacher and the SET. From Junior Infants to Third Class, three teachers will be timetabled for Literacy and two for Maths to work concurrently with one class group. From Fourth Class to Sixth, the SET and the class teacher will work concurrently.

(ii) Prevention Strategies

As a means of preventing the occurrence of learning difficulties insofar as possible, the following strategies are being implemented;

- The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to language development, e.g. phonological awareness, reading, writing and comprehension strategies
- The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to the teaching and language of aspects of Maths, e.g. our whole school approach to active learning and the use of concrete materials
- The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to the teaching and language of the Incredible Years Behaviour Management Programme, Friends for Life and Mind Up Programmes
- Promotion of parental understanding and involvement through attendance at an induction meeting for the parents of all classes in September, the arrangement of formal and informal Parent-Teacher Meetings, as well as ongoing collaboration with parents
- On-going teacher observation and assessment of children

(iii) Provision of intensive early intervention

- The principle of early intervention applies, therefore children from Junior Infants to Third Class are given priority in the allocation of additional support teaching
- Whole school/classroom support for all for literacy, numeracy and social and emotional literacy is provided by a number of teachers who team-teach concurrently up to five times per week from Junior Infants to Third Class. This is based on the Literacy Lift- Off model from the Reading Recovery Programme
- A Student Support File will be developed to plan interventions, document progress and needs, and to track a child's pathway through the Continuum of Support for those with identified needs. Following a period of intervention and review of progress, a decision is made as to the appropriate level of support required by the child. This may result in a decision to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or move to a higher or lower level of support.

(iv) Direction of resources towards children with greatest need

- Children who are identified as having significant needs through a process of ongoing assessment and intervention as set out in the Continuum of Support Process (DES, 2010) This will be evidenced through school-based assessment of attainment, behavioural, social and emotional functioning and needs set out in professional reports and ongoing monitoring of learning outcomes
- Children with significant special educational needs. For example, children with significant learning, behavioural, emotional, physical and sensory needs
- Children with mild or transient educational needs including those associated with speech and language difficulties, social or emotional problems, coordination, attention control difficulties and specific learning disabilities
- Children who may present with a range of learning whose interaction may present a significant barrier to the children's learning and ability to access the curriculum.
- Children who have additional literacy or language learning needs including those children who need additional English Additional language Support
- Children who were previously in receipt of supplementary teaching from a resource or learning support teacher and who continue to experience significant learning difficulties will be supported

- From Senior Infants upwards, all children are screened annually, using appropriate standardised tests, running records and sight word booklets
- Priority for special education teaching is given to those children who perform at or below the 10th percentile on standardised tests in reading and maths through consultation between the class teacher and SET. Children are also selected based on their performance in Test 2R, DEST, YARC, DTEL-S (Drumcondra Test Early Literacy-Screening, DTEN-S (Drumcondra Test of Early Numeracy-Screening) DPRT (Drumcondra Primary Reading Test) and Sigma T (Maths Tests) and Early Infant Teacher Observation Checklists.

Provision of Supplementary Teaching

The work of the SET is the provision of supplementary teaching to the children identified

- The school year will be divided into two Instructional Terms of approximately 20 weeks each
- The maximum caseload at any one time shall be 30 children
- Children will usually taken as part of a group but one to one teaching may be provided where small group teaching has not been effective
- Classes will be intensive in terms of frequency, everyday or 3/4 days a week, depending on class level and identified needs
- A system of withdrawal and/or in-class support will operate in response to the needs of the individual child
- The Class Teacher and the SET will meet to devise an IPLP (Individual Programme and Learning Profile) or an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in consultation with the Principal/Deputy Principal, class teacher and parents. The child can also contribute to setting his/her own short-term targets
- The SET will include the following documentation in individualised files which will be kept in the class teachers' room or in the SETs room as appropriate:
 - (i) Student support file which can include a general support plan, a behavioural plan or contract, an Individual Profile and Learning programme(IPLP), Individual Educational Plan(IEP)
 - (ii) Short term planning and programme record
 - (iii) Records, comprehension checks, Dolch word lists, Jackson Phonics Tests etc.
 - (iv) Samples of written work

Individual Child Learning Profile(IPLP)/ Individual Educational Plan(IEP)

The Individual Child Learning Profile (IPLP) will be drawn up for children in receipt of **School Support** and the Individual Educational Plan(IEP) will be drawn up for children in receipt of **School Support Plus - See Appendix 1**

The plan will address the children's full range of needs and will include:

- Details from the Class Teacher
- Assessment Results
- Other relevant information, e.g. reports from other agencies
- Learning strengths and attainments
- Priority learning needs which will be linked to assessment, interventions and will be strengths based and developed collaboratively
- Learning targets which will be measurable and observable
- Class based learning activities
- Supplementary support activities to include ICT
- Home Support Activities.

Educational plans will be differentiated in line with a child's needs. A support plan should include clear measurable learning targets and specify the resources and interventions that will be used to address student needs in line with the Continuum of Support process. Regular reviews of learning targets as part of an ongoing cycle of assessment, target setting, intervention and review will take place.

Continuing and Discontinuing Special Educational Teaching

- In general, children should not stay for more than 2 years in Supplementary Teaching, unless they are still at or below the 10th Percentile
- Following the end of an Instructional Term review as detailed above, a decision is made as to the appropriate level of support required by the child. A decision will be taken to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or move to a higher or lower level of support
- The decision making process involves consultation between the class teacher, the SET, and the child's parents and account is also taken of the overall SEN demands
- The criteria on which the decision will be made include a consideration whether:
 - (i) the child has achieved some/all of the learning targets set and
 - (ii) the child will be able to cope independently/semi independently in the classroom learn
- A decision to continue the provision of supplementary teaching will result in a revision of the child's IEP/IPLP.

Referral to out of School Agencies

- The SEN Co-ordinator organises the referral of children to outside agencies, e.g. Educational Psychologist, Speech & language Therapist, Occupational Therapist etc
- The Principal and/or SET and/or Class Teacher meet with the parents to discuss the need for the referral and to seek consent
- The Class Teacher completes the necessary referral form in consultation with the appropriate school personnel.
- The external professional visits the school to meet with the child, parents, principal, Class Teacher and the SET as appropriate, and the assessment is conducted
- This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed.
- Where concern arises regarding the manner of speed of the follow-through post assessment, such concern is pursued by the Principal with the out of school agency concerned.

Success Criteria

Practical indicators of the success of the policy;

- Positive improvements in standardised tests in literacy and numeracy among children in receipt of additional support teaching
- Achieving a coordinated approach to SEN in the school
- A fully inclusive school
- Children with the greatest level of need accessing the greatest level of support
- Core team of SET to meet the needs of children with SEN
- Maintaining records of individualised and differentiated programmes of work for individual/groups of children

- Clarity among staff as to their roles
- Bi-annual reviews of progress

Ratification & Communication

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management of St. John the Apostle, Knocknacarra NS, February 26th 2018 and subsequently communicated to the school community via the school's website.

Signed: _____
Frank Laffey, Chairperson, BoM

Date: _____

Appendix 1

Table 1: Identification of Educational Needs through the Continuum of Support Process	
Classroom Support	<p>The class teacher considers how to differentiate the learning programme effectively to accommodate the needs of all children in the class.</p> <p>A classroom support plan is developed and/or adjusted over time for those children who do not respond appropriately to the differentiated programme.</p> <p>This is informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental consultation • Teacher observation records • Teacher-designed measures/assessments • Basic needs checklist * • Learning environment checklist* • Child consultation - My Thoughts About School Checklist • Literacy and numeracy tests • Screening tests of language skills <p>A classroom support plan runs for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.</p>
School Support	<p>At this level a support plan is devised and informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher observation records • Teacher-designed measures/assessments • Parent and child interviews • Learning environment checklist • Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy • Formal observation of behaviour including ABC charts, frequency measures • Functional assessment as appropriate, including screening measures for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties <p>A support plan at this level may detail suitable teaching approaches including team-teaching, small groups or individual tuition.</p>

	A school support plan operates for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.
School Support Plus	<p>This level of the continuum is informed by a detailed, systematic approach to information gathering and assessment using a broad range of formal and informal assessment tools, reports from outside professionals (as appropriate) and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher observation and teacher-designed measures • Parent and child interviews • Functional assessment • Results of standardised testing such as measures of cognitive ability, social, emotional and behavioural functioning, adaptive functioning etc <p>Data generated from this process is used to plan an appropriate intervention and can serve as a baseline against which to map progress.</p> <p>A support plan at this level is likely to be more detailed and individualised, and to include longer term planning and consultation.</p>

A Continuum of Support

ACADEMIC SUCCESS

**SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL &
BEHAVIOURAL
COMPETENCE**



