

Special Education Needs Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy was revised by the Special Educational Needs team in consultation with staff in 2014.

Rationale

This policy is necessary in order to afford all children the most appropriate education possible, to comply with legislation and DES circulars and to streamline the provision of special needs support in the school.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

Star of the Sea NS seeks to provide an appropriate education for all pupils within an inclusive environment.

Aims

- To enable pupils of all abilities to avail of and benefit from an appropriate education
- To outline our whole school approach to teaching and learning in relation to pupils with special educational needs
- To set out procedures for the enrolment of children with special needs in this school
- To assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child in our school
- To outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs
- To establish communication structures for the involvement of all the partners in the education of pupils with special educational needs

These guidelines are laid out as follows:

1. Enrolment of children with identified special educational needs
2. Early Intervention Programmes
3. Provision for children with emerging special educational needs

The Staged Approach

Stage 1: Classroom Support

Stage 2: School Support

- a) Direction of Resources towards Pupils with Greatest Needs
- b) Procedures for Inclusion of Pupils for Supplementary Teaching
- c) Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching

Stage 3: School Support Plus - Consultation or referral for assessment to Outside Specialist

- a) Drafting and Implementing an Education Plan

4. Record Keeping

- a) Reports
- b) Diagnostic Tests
- c) Classroom Support Plans
- d) Individual/Group Profiles and Learning Programmes

5. Inclusion

6. Sixth Class and Transition

7. Collaboration and Communication

8. Resources

9. Roles and Responsibilities

10. Other Related Policies

11. Success Criteria

12. Implementation Date

13. Timetable for Review

14. Ratification and Communication

1. Enrolment of children with identified Special Educational Needs

Prior to the pupil's enrolment the school will acquaint itself with a pupil's special needs by:

- Parents meeting with the Principal
- Principal informing Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator of pupil's special needs
- School obtaining copies of all reports and assessments
- Incoming Junior Infant teachers visiting preschools and reporting any concerns to SEN co-ordinator and Principal

If there are health and safety issues arising from the child's mobility and care needs eg access, toilets, supervision, administration of medicines, intimate care, courses for SNAs, these are identified and every effort is made to address them prior to enrolment.

Early Intervention Programmes

In an attempt to remediate potential learning difficulties our school uses a range of programmes including:

- Jolly Phonics, CAPER, Building Bridges, Shared Reading, DEAR time and aspects of Ready, Set, Go Maths
- The MIST screening test and the Drumcondra Test of Early Numeracy are used in Senior Infants to identify difficulties
- Where possible additional in-class support is provided in Junior and Senior Infants by the Special Educational Needs team and Teachers of English as an Additional Language

2. Provision for Children with Emerging Special Educational Needs

The Staged Approach

Stage 1 - Classroom Support

Concerns about the academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development of children arise in a number of ways:

- Parents inform the Principal or Class Teacher of a concern they have regarding their child
- Teachers may have a concern regarding a child in their class

- Concerns may arise following standardised testing and consultations with Learning Support Teachers

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching. The class teacher plays a vital role in the initial identification of pupils' needs. When a class teacher has concerns about a child he/she:

- Differentiates any aspect of the class programme to meet the pupil's learning needs
- Informs parents, the SEN teacher assigned to that class and Principal
- A Classroom Support Plan is drawn up as soon as possible by the class teacher in consultation with parents and with the guidance of the SEN teacher if necessary. Parents are asked to sign the plan, (see Template in Appendix 1).
- This Classroom Support Plan applies to all pupils targeted through *in class support* and must be drawn up as above.

Stage 2: School Support

If the **Classroom Support Plan** (*Stage 1 - Circular 02/05*) is not successful, the pupil will be considered for **School Support** (*Stage 2 -Circular 02/05*) dependent on resources (*General Allocation*). Special Education Needs (SEN) Teachers and class teachers are involved in selecting pupils for diagnostic assessment.

a) Direction of Resources towards Pupils with Greatest Needs

Once pupils with identified significant special educational needs for whom the school has been allocated resource teaching hours are catered for at **School Support Plus** (*Stage 3- Circular 02/05*) priority is given to the following:

- Children scoring at or below the 10th Percentile on a standardised test of English and Mathematics ie Micra-T and Sigma-T.
- In class support for Junior and Senior Infants
- Pupils with assessment reports that identify a need but who have not been allocated specific hours including those with high incidence disabilities.
- Pupils who present with learning difficulties including speech and language, social or emotional, co-ordination or attention control difficulties.
- Pupils scoring between 11th - 20th Percentile on a standardised test of English and Mathematics, ie Micra-T and Sigma-T

- In class support for 1st to 6th Classes

All of the above categories of pupils are catered for under the General Allocation Model.

b) Procedures for Inclusion of Pupils for Supplementary Teaching

- Consent, either verbal or written, is sought from the parents by the classroom or SEN teacher before Diagnostic testing begins. The Diagnostic tests used by Learning Support and Resource Teachers are listed in *Appendix 2*.
- Written permission is needed for ongoing supplementary teaching. The Parental Permission form (*Appendix 3*) is completed and signed by parents and returned to the class teacher. These forms are kept on file by the SEN teacher.
- Should parents refuse to give their permission for a pupil to be assessed or receive extra support a written record of their decision signed by parents will be kept in the child's file in the office. The Board of Management will be informed.
- Following diagnostic testing pupils may be withdrawn individually or in a group with similar needs. An Individual Profile and Learning Programme (IPLP) or Grouped Profile and Learning Programme (GPLP) (*Appendix 4*) is devised by the Special Education teacher in consultation with parents and class teacher.
- The school year is divided into 2 instructional terms from September to January and January to June. IPLPs/GPLPs are drawn up at the beginning of each term. Following consultation with Class Teachers the IPLPs/GPLPs are discussed by the SEN teacher with the parent(s) at the annual Parent Teacher Meeting.

c) Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching

- At the end of each instructional term progress is evaluated. If it is considered that a child has reached a level where he/she can cope in class, without any intervention, supplementary teaching is discontinued following discussion with parents. The child is monitored closely by the class teacher.

Stage 3: School Support Plus - Consultation or Referral for Assessment to Outside Specialist

- Pupils with identified significant special educational needs arising from "low incidence" disabilities with the relevant assessment reports and for

whom the school has been allocated resource teaching hours are considered to be at **School Support Plus (Stage 3)**.

- Pupils who, having completed **Classroom Support (Stage 1)** and **School Support (Stage 2)** but who are still of concern will be considered for **School Support Plus (Stage 3)**.
- Having consulted with Parents, Class Teachers, SEN Teachers, SNAs and Principal the SEN Co-ordinator and Principal meet with the NEPs psychologist to prioritise children who are of concern.
- The psychologist may suggest:
 - a Consultation
 - an In School Plan (with defined targets and reviews) or
 - an Assessment
- If an assessment is deemed necessary the SEN Co-ordinator organises the documentation needed and venue.
- Following the receipt of the Assessment Report an application is made by the Principal to the DES for Resource Teaching Hours if this is deemed necessary.
- Upon allocation of Resource Teaching Hours an Individual Education plan (IEP) is drawn up.

a) Drafting and Implementing an Education Plan

- The aim of the IEP is to support as far as possible the integration of the child with special needs into the mainstream setting.
- IEPs are drawn up twice yearly by the Resource Teacher in September and January in consultation with class teachers, parents, SNAs and pupils as appropriate. Timeframes for IEPs are from September to January and January to June.

Steps in Drafting an Individual Education Plan

Step 1

- In September an informal "Meet and Greet" is held to:
 1. introduce all parties who work with the child
 2. identify the child's care needs
 3. outline the communication procedures in the school

Parent(s), Class Teacher, Resource Teacher and SNA attend this meeting by appointment in the Resource Teacher's room. The care needs identified at this meeting are listed and attached to the back of the child's IEP. A copy of these care needs is also given to the Class Teacher and SNA.

Step 2

- The Resource Teacher consults with the Class teacher and SNA, reviews previous IEPs, pupil's reports, diagnostic tests and drafts an IEP for the coming term.

Step 3

- By appointment an IEP meeting is held with Resource Teacher and Parent(s) to discuss the IEP. With parental input the IEP is finalised and signed by parents.
- The original IEP is kept in the SEN teacher's filing cabinet. A second copy of the IEP is kept in Room 37 (currently Ms. Corrigan's) which can be accessed on a read only basis by the class teacher and SNA. A copy of the IEP template used in this school is attached (*Appendix 5*).
- Having consulted with the Class Teacher and the SNA, the SEN teacher reviews the IEP with the Parent prior to the mid-term break in February. The level of success achieved in targets is noted on the IEP. Following a process of consultation with the class teacher, SNA and parent a new IEP is drawn up for the January - June term.
- In September the Resource teacher passes on his/her previous IEP (January- June) to the relevant SEN teacher. IEPs dated prior to January are shredded. **Note: this does not apply to the central bank of IEPs in Room 37. These are kept indefinitely.**
- During the child's allocated hours he/she may work individually with the Resource Teacher or in a group as appropriate.

4. Record Keeping

a) Reports

- All pupils' reports received are filed in the filing cabinet in Room 32A. Reports of Resource pupils with sanctioned allocated hours are filed in the top drawer. Reports of pupils for whom hours have not been sanctioned are filed in the lower drawer.
- To alert staff to the existence of reports a card is inserted into the pupil's main file in the office. An **orange** card is used for Resource pupils with sanctioned allocated hours whilst a **red** (*Appendix 6*) card is used for pupils who have a report but have not been sanctioned resource hours. The SEN teacher assigned to that class checks that these cards

are updated in September. For incoming infants the SEN Co-ordinator will update files.

b) Diagnostic Tests

- Diagnostic tests of pupils who attend either Learning Support or Resource are kept in the SEN teacher's filing cabinet. These tests are noted on the pupil's Individual or Group Learning Programme. These tests are passed on to the next SEN teacher. Diagnostic tests of pupils who do not attend Learning Support are kept in the pupil's main file in the office.

c) Classroom Support Plans

- When completed Classroom Support Plans are kept in the pupil's main file in the office.

d) (i) Individual Profile and Learning Programmes (IPLPs) and (ii) Group Profiles and Learning Programmes (GPLPs)

- Individual and Group Learning Programmes are kept by the SEN teacher and the most recent one is passed on to the next SEN teacher.

5. Inclusion

Our school promotes and supports an inclusive education by:

- Implementing an inclusive enrolment policy
- Implementing the NEPS Continuum of Support model and Early Intervention Programmes
- Supporting students with special educational needs to participate to the greatest extent possible in school programmes and activities (*see below for examples*)
- Co-operative/team teaching within classrooms
- Collaborative problem-solving within classrooms
- Mixed groupings within with classrooms
- Individualised planning for students with special educational needs
- Differentiating the curriculum

In addition to the above the following programmes and initiatives are implemented to ensure that all pupils with Special Educational Needs are included as fully as possible in the life of the school and the classroom. These practices develop a culture of appreciating difference among all within the school community.

- SPHE taught in all classes
- Curricular work and responses to misbehaviour are differentiated in line with Classroom Support Plans and Behaviour Support Plans for SEN pupils
- Learning Support and Resource Hours are offered in either a one to one; small group (academic, social skills or co-ordination) or in-class setting to best accommodate pupils' needs
- Consideration is given to SEN pupils when split classes are being created
- Special Needs Assistants, through their work continually encourage the development of independent life skills
- Participation where possible in all Concerts, Performances, Tours, Church Services and Sports activities
- Peer tutoring
- Class teachers take into account SEN pupils' schedules when drawing up their class timetables
- Sixth class pupils assist with Infant Classes eg yard games, playtime on a wet day
- Liaison with outside agencies/personnel involved prior to transitions eg Pre School to Primary, Primary to Second Level, from Special Classes/Schools to Primary School
- Staff training is undertaken when needed from relevant agencies
- Whole school initiatives which promote inclusiveness eg World Autism Awareness Day

6. Sixth Class and Transition

- In September of 5th Class all 5th Class Resource pupils' reports are checked by the SEN teachers working with 5th Class to determine which reports are in/out of date with a view to accessing resources when transitioning to Secondary School. Parents are alerted should the pupil's report need updating. Parents are also asked to research second level schools which are best suited to their child's needs.
- In September of 6th Class the 6th Class Teacher(s) alerts parents of the need to register their child with a Secondary school. Parents are also informed at the IEP meeting of the need to visit their prospective secondary school to discuss their child's needs in preparation for transition.
- Prior to the mid-term break in February the 6th Class Teacher(s) in collaboration with the relevant SEN teachers fill out a profile (*Appendix 8*) for all 6th Class Learning Support/ Resource pupils. This includes

information on: whether the pupil has been allocated Resource Hours or falls under the *General Allocation Model*; exemption from Irish; medication; attendance/absenteeism.

- In February/March the SEN Co-ordinator arranges a date when the SEN teacher(s) and 6th Class Teacher(s) meet with St. Peters staff to discuss Learning Support/ Resource pupils.
- Following on from this meeting the SEN Co-ordinator and relevant SNAs meet with St. Peters staff to discuss the care needs of pupils they have been assigned to.
- At the beginning of May the SEN teachers working with 6th class Resource pupils arrange an orientation/familiarisation tour with prospective Secondary Schools. Generally two SEN teachers accompany pupils on these visits.
- 6th Class Resource pupils work through a transition programme with their Resource Teacher.

7. Collaboration and Communication

- The Special Educational Needs Team meets regularly to review all pupils in school and meetings of the SEN Team take place with the Principal twice a term.

8. Resources

- An inventory of resources is in the process of being compiled (2014) and will be attached to this policy when completed.
- SEN resources will be assigned to the rooms of specific SEN teachers who will be responsible for storing and tracking these resources.
- Resources are used on a shared basis and do not belong to any specific child unless they have been specifically allocated to that child by the SEN team eg laptop.
- Whilst all staff have access to all resources their use is determined by the SEN team so that pupils derive the maximum benefit from them.
- Resources are tracked by using a sign in/out log book. The resource inventory will be reviewed each May and October by the SEN team and Special Needs Assistants.
- Should any teacher require additional special resources he/she informs the SEN teacher assigned to that class. The SEN team together with the Principal then prioritise resources to be purchased.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Management:

- Oversees the development, implementation and review of the Special Educational Needs Policy
- Ensures that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for Learning support/Resource Teachers
- Provides adequate funds for the purchase of materials
- Provides a secure facility for storage of records relating to pupils in receipt of special education
- Funds Professional development and membership of professional bodies and attendance at their conferences eg ILSA and Cork Network of Resource Teachers
- Provides an allowance to purchase books of professional interest to form a reference library for staff

The Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for the operation of the school's Learning Support /Resource Programme and the operation of services for children with special educational needs. He/she:

- Works with the management authorities, teachers, parents, and where appropriate, students, in the development, implementation and review of whole-school policies that promote the inclusion of students with special educational needs
- Ensures that all such policies are described in the school plan
- Continuously monitors whole-school policies and provision for students with special educational needs
- Consults and liaises, as required, with relevant external bodies and agencies such as NEPS, NCSE, SESS
- Endeavours to ensure that students with special educational needs have access to experienced teachers with expertise and knowledge about their particular learning requirements.
- Liaises with the SENO with regard to support hours and the provision of support personnel and resources
- Arranges for classroom accommodation and resources, as appropriate
- Informs the SEN Co-ordinator of any correspondence and information received from outside agencies and/or parents
- Meets with the SEN team twice a term

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

The SEN Co-ordinator:

- oversees the day-to-day operation of the SEN policy
- oversees and stores reports, assessment tests and IEPs of all SEN pupils
- monitors and evaluates SEN provision
- facilitates and chairs meetings of the SEN team within the school
- oversees the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and /or learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need
- keeps teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed in initiating referrals
- maintains a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and/or special educational services
- helps to co-ordinate the caseloads/work schedules of SEN teachers
- supports the implementation of a tracking system at whole school level to monitor the progress of pupils with learning difficulties
- liaises with external agencies such as psychological services to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs

The Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching. The class teacher plays a vital role in the:

- initial identification of pupils' need
- differentiates the class programme to meet pupils' learning needs
- liaises and communicates with parents, the SEN teacher assigned to that class and Principal in relation to needs within the class
- draws up a Classroom Support Plan for the pupil in consultation with parents and with the guidance of the SEN teacher if necessary
- supports the targets and activities outlined in the IPLP/GPLP or IEP

The Special Educational Needs Teacher

The main role of the SEN teacher is the provision of supplementary teaching to pupils who have been identified and selected for additional support. Resource/ learning support can be provided in a variety of ways. The support teacher

might team-teach by working in the classroom with the class teacher or withdraw pupils in small groups and/or individually for a period of time (depending upon the nature of pupils' needs) for intensive teaching of key skills.

The SEN teacher:

- works closely with class teachers to implement early intervention programmes
- helps in the co-ordination of standardised/screening tests
- carries out diagnostic testing and interprets the outcomes of these
- assists the class teacher in drawing up **The Classroom Support Plan (Stage 1)**
- draws up an Individual Profile and Learning Programme or Group Profile and Learning Programme (IPLP/GPLP) at **School Support (Stage 2)**
- draws up an Individual Education Plan (IEP) at **School Support Plus (Stage 3)**
- draws up a Fortnightly Plan and Progress Record
- may assist the class teacher when meeting with parents to discuss the outcomes of diagnostic tests, targets and actions agreed and how these can best be supported at home
- in consultation with the class teacher he/she may advise when supplementary teaching is to be discontinued and how best the pupil's work can be monitored and supported at home and in the classroom
- reviews IPLPs/GPLPs with parents at the annual Parent Teacher Meetings
- reviews IEPs at the end/beginning of a new instructional term
- in collaboration with the class teacher communicates the agreed 'care' needs of the pupil to the SNA as laid out in the IEP

The Special Needs Assistant

- A key goal of SNA support is to help children to develop their independent living skills
- When drawing up the IEP the Resource teacher consults with the class teacher and SNA in relation to the care needs of the pupil. When the IEP is finalised these targets are communicated to the SNA
- In September a "Meet and Greet" is held between parents, classroom teachers, SEN teacher and SNA. The purpose of the meeting is to introduce the various people involved with the child, to discuss the care needs of the child and communication procedures

- If directed by the SEN/class teacher and/or other professionals the SNA may keep a factual log of significant incidents/developments for the SEN child as evidence of progress using only pupils' initials.
- SNAs assist in Sensory and 'blue break' sessions. These should follow a specific timetable to be most effective. The content should be worked out with help from Physiotherapists and/or Occupational Therapists in conjunction with the SEN and class teacher and a specific programme should be followed.
- Where necessary the SNA supports the implementation of a Behaviour Improvement Plan which may be in place for the child.
- May assist other children in the school, who from time to time need assistance or who have intermittent care needs, but who may not have been assessed as requiring SNA support on a permanent basis.
- Any communication involving parents or outside agencies regarding a Resource child should be made directly to the class teacher.
- SNAs primary responsibility on yard duty is to supervise the SEN pupil(s) to whom they have been specifically assigned, from a distance if possible
- Other duties appropriate to the SNA's role as may be determined by the needs of the SEN pupil(s) and DES Circulars.
- Be available to attend IEP Meetings

Parents

Parents can support the work of the school by:

- Keeping teachers updated by sharing relevant information about their child on an ongoing basis
- Implementing suggested home-based activities with their child
- Attending scheduled meetings

Pupils

Pupils can become more independent as learners by:

- Being made aware of the learning targets that have been set for them and being given opportunities to contribute to the setting of such targets
- Developing ownership of skills and strategies that are taught and learning to apply these to improve their own learning
- Contributing to the evaluation of their progress by participating in appropriate assessment activities, including self-assessment

10. Other Related Policies

- Our Enrolment Policy supports an inclusive education in line with current guidelines
- In line with the Continuum of Support a flexible approach to behaviour management is adopted in the case of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This is reflected in our Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies.
- Our Assessment Policy outlines in further detail the procedures for assessment and identification of pupils' learning needs

11. Success Criteria

Indicators of success of this policy include:

- Pupils are welcomed into our school in an inclusive environment
- All pupils are supported to the greatest extent possible to achieve their potential
- Procedures and practices in the management of special needs provision are clear and transparent to all members of the school
- Consistency of approach by all involved and good communication structures in place to support pupils with special educational needs

12. Implementation Date

This policy is currently being implemented and will continue to do so from September 2014.

13. Timetable for Review

This policy will be reviewed in January 2017.

14. Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on

Signature

References

Delivery for Students with Special Educational Needs: A better and more equitable way - NCSE Working Group on a Proposed New Model for Allocating Teaching Resources for Students with Special Educational Needs, 2014, NCSE, Meath

Special Education Circular 02/05: Organisation of Teaching Resources for Pupils who need Additional Support in Mainstream Primary Schools

EPSEN Act: Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004

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Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support, Guidelines for Teachers, Department of Education and Science, 2007

Learning Support Guidelines 2000, Stationery Office, Dublin

Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process by National Council for Special Education, May 2006, Stationery Office, Dublin

Circular 0030/2014: The Special Needs Assistant (SNA) scheme to support teachers in meeting the care needs of some children with special educational needs, arising from a disability

Circular 0071/2011: Public Service (Croke Park Agreement) Special Needs Assistants

Circular Letter SNA 15/05: Contract of Employment for Special Needs Assistants