

St. Patrick's Comprehensive School, Shannon, Co. Clare.

Special Needs Policy

Introduction/Rationale

This policy document aims to outline the form that additional education support for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) takes in the school and the philosophy, which underpins it. This policy document was drawn up in consultation with Board of Management, Principal, Deputy Principal, Subject Teachers and Learning Support team of St. Patrick's Comprehensive. It aims to outline the form that additional educational support for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) takes in this school. The rationale for this policy is based on the principles laid out in the EPSEN Act 2004 which state that: "People with SEN shall have the same right to avail of and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers,"

This policy is a reflection of our current practice.

Inclusion

St. Patrick's Comprehensive School welcomes pupils with Special Education Needs and in line with the EPSEN Act 2004 recognises "the need to provide education of people with such needs shall wherever possible take place in an inclusive environment." The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers and parents on the provision of effective learning support to pupils experiencing low achievement and/ or learning difficulties. Also to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act 1998, Equal Status Act 2004, Education Welfare Act 2000 the EPSEN Act 2004 and the Disability Act 2005 to enable children with special educational needs to join in the normal activities of the school along with all other children.

Enrolment

The school aims to meet the needs of any child whom the parent wishes to register at the school as long as a place is available and the admission criteria are fulfilled. Parents are required to notify the school of their child's special needs in advance of enrolment. The Board of Management will request a copy of the child's medical or psychological report. No child can be refused admission solely on the grounds that he/she has special needs except where the provision required is incompatible with that available in our school.

Special Education Mission Statement

All pupils have a right to the education which is appropriate to them as individuals. We want our pupils to feel that they are a valued part of our school community. As far as possible, it is our aim to minimise the difficulties that children may experience. We are dedicated to helping each student to achieve his/her individual potential. The provision of a quality system of learning support and an inclusive curriculum is integral to this commitment.

We take into account the different backgrounds, experiences, interests and strengths that influence the way in which students learn when we plan our approaches to teaching and learning throughout the school.

Aims

Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

- Optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy
- Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning
- Enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners
- Enhance basic skills and learning strategies to a level which enables pupils to participate in the full curriculum
- Expose students to stimulating learning experiences so that school is enjoyed and valued
- Develop a partnership with parents/carers in order that their knowledge, views and experience can assist us in assessing and providing for their children
- Inform and include parents of children who are receiving support teaching of the aims and implementation of the learning support programme
- Promote cooperation among teachers and the learning support team in the implementation of the learning support policy
- Ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities towards children with special needs and are able to exercise them

- Ensure that all children regardless of their ability are included and are part of all activities and are part of the school community.
- Monitor our effectiveness in achieving the above aims

Categories of Special Education Needs (SEN): To date, the school has provided for the following categories of students with Special Educational Needs:

- Borderline/ Mild General Learning Disability
- Emotional / Behavioural Difficulties—Attention deficit disorder (ADD),
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Specific Learning Difficulty—Dyslexia, dyscalculia
- Physical disabilities—Dyspraxia, Cerebral Ataxia, Cystic Fibrosis and Duchene Muscular Dystrophy
- Mild Speech and Language Disorders
- Sensory Difficulties (hearing & visual impairments)
- ESOL students (English for students of other languages)
- Autism / Autistic Spectrum Disorder (e.g.. Asperger’s Syndrome)

In addition to these categories we understand that under circular 08/02 the following categories of SEN exist also:

- Moderate General Learning Disability
- Severe / Profound General Learning Disability
- Down’s Syndrome

2. Staff Roles and Responsibilities

In attempting to achieve the above aims the B.O.M., principal and staff will take all reasonable steps within the limits of the resources available to fulfil the requirements outlined in this policy document and the ‘Learning Support Guidelines’ 2000.

Board of Management

The B.O.M. will fulfil its statutory duties towards pupils with special needs. It will ensure that the provision required is an integral part of the school development plan. Board members will be knowledgeable about the school’s special educational needs provision- funding, equipment and personnel and will ensure the provision of adequate resources.

Principal & Deputy Principal

- The Principal has overall responsibility for the day-to-day management and monitoring of the provision and will work closely with the learning support and resource teachers.
- The Principal has overall responsibility for the timetabling and allocation of SEN resource hours and other school supports.
- The Principal will keep the B.O.M. informed about the working of this policy.
- The Principal will encourage and facilitate members of staff to participate in training to help them meet the objectives of this policy.
- The Principal will consult with the parents of children with special needs in planning the appropriate supports.
- In consultation with the learning support and resource teachers the Principal will liaise with the SENO with regard to support teaching hours.
- The Principal will also liaise with external agencies such as the DES, NCCA, NCSE, NEPS, SSSE, SLSS, CAMHS and the HSE to arrange for provision for pupils with special needs.
- The Principal & SEN Co-ordinator will liaise with National schools to plan for the specific needs of children with special education needs on their transition to Second Level.

Subject Teachers

- The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her classes including those selected for supplementary teaching or receiving resource hours.
- Subject teachers will endeavour to create a classroom environment in which learning difficulties can be alleviated.
- Subject teachers will implement teaching strategies which optimise the learning of all pupils.
- Subject teachers will differentiate the class curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of all pupils within the class.
- Subject teachers will also identify children who are experiencing difficulties and work with the learning support teacher and parents to decide on the appropriate plan.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator /Resource Teacher

The SENS co-ordinator will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the day to day operation of the ‘Learning Support Policy/Special Education Policy’
- Providing supplementary teaching
- Coordinating provision for children with special educational needs
- To consult with class teachers on the identification of pupils who may need diagnostic assessment, taking into account the pupils’ scores on an appropriate standardised screening measure
- To carry out a comprehensive diagnostic assessment of each pupil who has been identified as experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties and then in consultation with the class teacher and parents, identify the type and level of learning support that is needed to meet the pupil’s needs
- To maintain a record of the attendance of pupils at supplementary teaching sessions
- In consultation with class teachers and parents to develop an Individual Education Programme for each pupil who requires one.
- To meet with parents of each pupil who has been selected for diagnostic assessment in order to discuss results, and advise on how the student can be supported at home.
- To meet with parents of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching at parent teacher meetings to discuss pupil’s progress.
- To liaise and advise subject teachers in such areas as individual pupil assessment and program planning, as well as teaching/learning strategies for pupils experiencing learning difficulties
- To process applications for Reasonable Accommodations for State Exams
- To contribute to decision-making regarding the purchase of learning resources, books and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms, in the school library and in the learning support room
- Liaise with and advise SNAs with regard to supporting children with special needs
- Monitor and evaluate SEN provision
- Oversee the records of all children with special needs and store copies of all assessments, tests and IEP’s in the locked filing cabinet of the learning support room.
- Liaise with external agencies including NEPS, the SENO and the SESS whenever necessary.
- Maintain a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and/or special educational services.

Specialist Teacher with Resource Hours

- To support and contribute to the individual learning needs of SEN students.
- To formulate programmes of their own which provide curricular support to the SEN student.
- To work in close collaboration and consultation with the SEN department and subject teacher in the creation of relevant and resourced programmes of study.

Role of Guidance Teacher

- To be aware of students with assessed educational needs
- To co-ordinate the school assessment of incoming First Years
- To advise on appropriate subject and programme choice
- To advise if a reduced curriculum is being considered
- To investigate and advise on appropriate Third Level options
- To assist in the DARE process
- Enable the student to continue learning in adult life

Role of Chaplain

The school Chaplain has a specific mission towards the spiritual care and faith development of the entire school population.

Role of Special Needs Assistants

Special Needs Assistants form part of the learning support team, along with the learning support and resource teacher. Their role will be:

- To foster the participation of special needs pupils in the social and academic process of the school and enable pupils to become independent learners.
- To work as part of the learning support team and the wider school community to promote an inclusive curriculum and environment for children with special needs
- Be available to work with other children in the school with special needs, apart from the child they have been appointed to
- Work closely with the class teacher to develop a plan as how best to support an individual child's needs, for example, physical disability or attention deficit.
- To meet with parents to discuss the child's social, emotional and physical needs and to plan together on how to meet these needs in school.

- To report to parents on how the child is coping in school in terms of their particular social, emotional or physical needs.

3. Model of Organisation

St. Patrick's Comprehensive School organises its classes in a mixed ability setting. Each first year group is formed with a deliberate mix of all ability ranges. Classes are taught as a homogenous unit for each subject, from first to third year. The school does however bear in mind that some subjects do not lend themselves to being taught as mixed ability and may have different requirements depending on the syllabus being taught. This can result in some classes within a small number of subjects being banded.

Identification Process

An important role of the SEN department is to establish the procedures necessary for the preliminary screening of pupils and subsequent selection of pupils for more detailed diagnostic assessment. Central to this process is the subject teacher and the parent.

School based identification

A subject teacher, tutor and/or Year Head can refer any student they are concerned about to the SEN department. Any referral made by a subject teacher or tutor must be forwarded to the SEN Co-Ordinator who will then begin a more in-depth assessment.

The Second stage of school based identification process is to form a profile of the student. This is a process of formal and informal assessment to be conducted by the SEN Co-Ordinator.

Informal Assessment:

- Observations from subject teachers, class tutors or Year Head.
- Consultation with parents.
- Student Journal.
- Meeting with pupil.

Formal Assessment:

- Review of transfer information from Primary School
- Review of Incoming Assessments, in house exams and reports.
- Behavioural/Performance record if appropriate.
- CAT 4

Following this profiling stage recommendations are made as to possible support.

These recommendations might include

- No need for further action.
- Needs for monitoring/support in mainstream setting.
- Learning support or Social Skill training
- Referral to outside agencies

All information / data gathered is recorded in the student's file.

Parents are informed of recommendations and supports to be implemented.

Parent Referral Process

When a parent notifies the Principal that a student is not benefiting from the regular education programme provided by the school the Principal, with the parents' approval, initiates the administration of the preliminary screening process (as outlined above).

4. Model of SEN provision

Depending on the needs of the individual student the following approaches to support will be considered:

- Team Teaching
- Support Teaching
- Inclusion of SNA in specific classes
- Small group withdrawal
- Individual withdrawal
- Curricular reduction

Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP): A small minority of pupils may not be willing or able to comply with school / class rules to the same extent as other pupils. For these pupils, it may be necessary to devise an Individual Behaviour Plan.

There is no one way to devise or to present this plan, but the following might need to be considered:

1. The purpose of any Behaviour Plan should be to help the pupil to take responsibility for his own behaviour and to teach him how to make appropriate choices.

2. A multi-disciplinary approach is recommended, one that includes the teacher(s), Learning Support Team, Special Needs Assistant, Deputy Principal, parent(s) and the pupil in the process.

3. As part of the Behaviour Plan, a Behaviour Contract may need to be drawn up which is signed by all parties. In drawing up this contract, it is important to use language which is clear and appropriate to the age and ability of the pupil. There are a number of steps to an Individual Behaviour Plan. These are generally the steps that one might take:

- Identify Problem Behaviours:
- Observe and Record Behaviour:
- Analyse Data Gathered:
- Implement Intervention Strategy:
- Evaluate the Intervention:

Review/Evaluation of pupil's progress

The progress of each pupil will be monitored on an ongoing basis throughout the instructional term and a decision made as to whether support should continue or not. Parents will be informed if support is not to continue.

5. Timetabling of Resource Provision

Irish Exemptions

Students with special educational needs who have an exemption from Irish may be timetabled for Resource at this time.

Modern Language Waivers (Junior Cycle)

At Junior Cycle modern languages are facilitated on the timetable at the same time. Students who are exempt from the study of a modern language, may attend Resource or learning support at this time.

Withdrawals

The SEN department may withdraw students from other subject areas in consultation with the respective subject department and with parental permission. In some cases students with SEN may be on a reduced curriculum in accordance with the nature of their educational needs.

Senior Cycle

At Senior Cycle Resource and learning support is provided on a one-to-one or small group basis depending on the needs of the students. Students who have been in receipt of extra support at Junior Cycle will be carefully monitored and their needs addressed on a case by case basis. The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) is recommended for students whose learning needs would not be met by the demands of the traditional Leaving Certificate. In instances where an SEN student chooses LCA it is generally accepted that the curriculum itself supports the student but where it is apparent that additional support is necessary for an SEN student, this will be reviewed on an individual basis.

6. Record Keeping Procedures and Sharing of Information

Copies of Educational Assessment Reports and Medical Reports are entrusted to the Special Needs Co-Ordinator and are stored securely in the front office. These are confidential documents and are not disseminated to other staff members.

A brief summary of the special educational needs of each child is distributed to teachers by the Special needs Co-Ordinator.

Teachers are made aware of individual student needs at the Staff Briefing at the beginning of the academic year. Class lists are provided which give information on STEN scores, literacy and numeracy levels and any significant health or intellectual diagnosis. These lists are coded to ensure confidentiality.

Reporting Procedures

Parents are informed of student progress through report cards, parent teacher meetings and individual correspondence from Resource or learning support teachers. Learning support and subject teachers meet informally to discuss the progress of the students.

Procedures for application for Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate

Examinations (RACE)

The Learning Support Co-ordinator is responsible for processing the applications for Reasonable Accommodations and strict criteria and guidelines set out by the department of education must be adhered to.

Parental concerns

If a parent has a concern about the special educational provision made, then they should in the first instance make an appointment to speak to the learning support teacher or resource teacher. The concern will be investigated and dealt with as early as possible. If the matter is not resolved to the parent's satisfaction then the matter proceeds should be referred to the Principal.

7. Monitoring and Reviewing of Policy

This policy will be reviewed in 2016, and at least every two years after that. The Board of Management and the Principal will ensure that special needs provision is an integral part of the school improvement plan.