

# Special Education Needs Policy

## St.Colman's N.S., Cloyne

### **Introduction**

Special Education Needs are defined in the "Education for persons with Special Education Needs Act 2004" as follows 'A special education need refers to a person who has a restriction in capacity to participate in, and benefit from education, due to an enduring physical, sensory, mental health, or learning disability, or any other condition (including exceptionally able pupils) which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition.'

For the purposes of this policy, we define inclusion as 'The process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by considering and adapting its curricula, organisation and provision.' The goal of inclusion is not to erase differences, but to enable all pupils to belong within an educational community that validates and values their individuality.

This policy was formulated by the Principal and staff of St.Colman's N.S. assisted by facilitators from the PPDS and SESS. It is a revised and updated version of the previous Special Education Policy. This policy reflects DES circulars 07/02, 08/02, 24/03 and 02/05.

### **AIMS**

This policy is intended to provide practical guidance to teachers, parents and other concerned persons on the provision of effective learning support to pupils experiencing or likely to experience learning difficulties. The policy will also fulfil our obligations under the Education Act 1998, Education and Welfare Act 2000 and Disability Bill 2002.

- To outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to pupils with special needs.
- To enable pupils to participate in the full curriculum
- To develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in pupils
- To enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners

- To provide supplementary teaching and additional support in English and/or Mathematics
- To involve parents in supporting their children
- To promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole school policies on learning support for pupils
- To provide suitable teaching for those with High and Low incidence needs
- Establish testing and assessment guidelines so intervention (in or out of class) can be more immediate
- To establish early intervention programmes designed to enhance learning and to prevent difficulties in learning

## **Principles**

Effective learning Programmes are based on the following principles:

- Effective whole school policies and parental involvement
- Prevention of failure
- Provision of intensive early intervention
- Direction of resources to pupils in greatest need

## **School Philosophy**

St. Colman's N.S. has a catholic ethos but welcomes children from all or no faiths. We aim to provide a holistic approach to education taking account of individual needs, abilities, interests and social and cultural backgrounds. We strive to create a positive and caring, inclusive environment conducive to learning, enabling each child reach his /her full potential with confidence and enthusiasm. We promote an atmosphere where staff and pupils respect themselves and others and where each person takes responsibility for his/her actions.

## **Enrolment of children with special needs**

Parents are given an enrolment and information form to fill out prior to their child enrolling in the school. On this form parents are asked to give details of all assessments the child may have had. The school stresses the importance of parents informing the school of any 'special need' their child may have. If a pupil has an identified special need and is already receiving a service from another organisation, it is the responsibility of the parents to notify the school. The Special Education needs Organiser (SENO) is contacted at the earliest opportunity so as to apply for resource

teaching/SNA assistance for the pupil. Parents will be informed at all times of progress and meetings are arranged with them to discuss concerns. The class teacher and SEN team will read all current reports on the child prior to receiving the child in school.

Having gathered the relevant information, the Board of Management will ensure that a child with Special Education Needs will be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have special needs, unless the degree or nature of those needs is not in the best interests of the child and that it does not interrupt the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated.

### **Inclusion**

Programmes will be designed by the Class Teacher to facilitate inclusion for special needs pupils in all aspects of the curriculum at their ability and competence levels. This could include oral and group work, practical learning experiences, a buddy system, circle time, computer skills. (See appendix on Differentiation) School personnel will be made aware of the special educational needs of the pupils and of the strategies necessary to integrate them in all aspects of school life

### **Special Education Needs Team**

The SEN team consists of the Principal, teachers providing resource, learning support and language support for international pupils and for some pupils a Special Needs Assistant.

### **Special Education Team meetings**

The SEN team meets twice yearly (September and February) with individual mainstream teachers to discuss progress of children currently receiving additional support from the SEN team. The Post Holder with responsibility for Special Needs will arrange the dates for these meetings and each S.N. Teacher will record the minutes/outcomes of these meetings. Each teacher will be responsible for storing all records in a secure filing cabinet.

Individual Education Programmes are drafted, reviewed or updated following these meetings. Parent Teacher meetings are held in December each school year. However, parents of SEN pupils may be invited to attend meetings at other times of the year to discuss progress and /or concerns and when devising an IEP. (See section on provision of Supplementary Teaching)

### **Role of the Classroom Teacher (L.S. guidelines pg.42)**

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching. A particular responsibility of the class teacher is to create a classroom environment in which learning difficulties can be prevented or at least alleviated. This is best achieved by grouping pupils for instruction, providing lower achieving pupils with strategies for reading and problem solving, adapting learning materials for lower-achieving pupils and liaising closely with their parents. Where a pupil is selected to receive supplementary teaching, it is essential that the class teacher should contribute to developing the learning targets in the pupil's Individual Profile and Learning Programme and to the planning and implementation of activities designed to attain those targets. Where supplementary teaching cannot be provided for a pupil, or is being discontinued, the class teacher will need to develop and implement a support programme that meets the pupil's changing needs.

### **In the Classroom**

Pupils with SEN require an environment which is well organised and predictable and a programme which is clearly presented with plenty of opportunities for success. Pupils with SEN will participate and be facilitated to access all areas of the curriculum. Realistic learning goals and expectations will be adopted in relation to the pupil's overall progress. The curriculum and presentation of the curriculum will be adapted and differentiated as needed. The Teacher will vary the use of strategies to meet the learning needs of the pupils with SEN. Where the pupil is unable to participate in the class curriculum, an individual programme of work will be designed for the pupil in consultation with the SEN teacher. Depending on the level of need a SNA may be assigned to the child at certain times of the day. The teacher will encourage active participation by the pupil in the class. There will be a balance between the provision for the pupil's academic and social needs. ICT may be used to further facilitate the pupil's learning. Certain pupils may have a recommendation for an exemption from Irish; however, parents must request this exemption and give their consent in writing to the Principal. S.E.N. children granted an exemption from Irish will continue to participate in all Oral Irish lessons.

Homework is allocated by the class teacher. The SEN teacher may also set homework for the pupil. (In consultation with the parents)

## **The Staged Approach**

The SEN team with the Principal and relevant teachers adopt a staged approach to intervention. (See Model of Staged Approach) if concern remains after intervention and additional support from the teacher and the SEN team, the school may request a consultation and assessment of the pupil's need from a specialist outside the school. Where this is the case, the parent's permission in writing is sought. If the parents refuse to give their permission for the pupil to receive extra support, a written record of their decision signed by the parents will be kept in the child's file.

## **Learning Support**

The following criteria will be used to prioritise pupils for learning support/supplementary teaching:

1. Pupils scoring at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile in literacy on standardised tests (Micra - t administered in late October)
2. Pupils scoring at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile in mathematics (Sigma -T administered in October)
3. Pupils diagnosed as having a disability by an outside professional agency e.g. Specific Learning, Mild General Learning Disability or Speech and Language delay/disorder but do not meet the criteria to allow the school obtain Resource hours for their benefit. Children with a Mild Learning Disability will get support in literacy and Maths.
4. Pupils who have been identified as being exceptionally able by the Class Teacher will be introduced to the Staged Approach. The Class Teacher will challenge the child where possible by differentiating the curriculum. If necessary the child will be tested using an appropriate diagnostic test. Depending on the results of these tests, these pupils may be offered extra support if Stage 1 intervention has shown to be inadequate. Records of all interventions will be kept.
5. Children with Behavioural/Emotional difficulties who in the opinion of the Whole School Staff need intervention will be offered support if after Stage 1 sufficient progress has not been made. All staff will have a record sheet in which all behaviours which cause concern are recorded. Records will identify cause, consequence and location of misbehaviour. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to ensure that these logs are kept updated.

- At Stage 1, problematic behaviour is recorded on tracking logs (template enclosed). This may help identify patterns of behaviour, which will help a teacher devise a behaviour plan.
6. Early Intervention in Literacy (Infants to 1<sup>st</sup> class who continue to experience difficulty, despite Stage 1 interventions by the class teacher - the class teacher will be asked to provide recorded/written evidence of interventions adopted)
  7. Early Intervention in Mathematics (Infants to 1st class who continue to experience difficulty, despite Stage 1 interventions by the class teacher - recorded evidence of interventions used will be required)
  8. Pupils who score between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> percentile on a standardised test in literacy will be selected and an appropriate diagnostic test will be administered to them (with parental permission) If this test shows a discrepancy between different areas of literacy (e.g. above average in fluency but score below average in comprehension), that child will be considered for Learning Support. Priority will be given to pupils who have completed Stage 1 of the staged approach (see appendix)
  9. Pupils scoring above the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile in mathematics but who continue to experience difficulty, despite stage 1 interventions by the class teacher

Learning Support Teaching may be conducted either in or out of the classroom. In situations where it is deemed suitable and of benefit, the support teacher may work in the classroom. This may take the form of Team Teaching, Station Teaching or Parallel Teaching. In some cases the LS/RT may teach the class allowing the class teacher to support the child with S.E.N.

### **Resource Teaching**

Pupils who have been assessed by an outside professional agency and who have been diagnosed with a recognised low incidence disability may qualify for resource hours. Once the school receives a report recommending support for the child, parents' permission is sought to make an application to the SENO. The school may be allocated resource hours for the benefit of the child by the SENO using the Low Incidence Model. Parents'

permission is sought before a child is timetabled for support. The SEN teacher and class teacher in consultation with parents and outside agencies will design an IEP for the child. The IEP will identify specific areas of need for the child and these will be incorporated into his/her scheme of work.

### **Traveller Education**

Pupils from the travelling community are fully included in mainstream classes. These pupils may receive additional help from a resource teacher assigned for pupils from the travelling community. (Subject to sanction from the DES)

### **Language Support for International Pupils**

International, non English speaking pupils are entitled to 2 years language support from first enrolment in an Irish school. Oral language communication is the primary focus of the teaching, along with reinforcement of the mainstream curriculum. Pupils receive support either individually or in a group. Language support teaching is conducted either in or out of class depending on the needs of the children. Children enrolled for longer than 2 years may be entitled to additional language support depending on their needs and resources granted by the DES.

### **Special Needs Assistants**

A Special Needs Assistant may be appointed to the school to support a child. Parents' permission is sought before an application is made to the SENO for a SNA. The SNA works under the direction and supervision of the class teacher in order to promote effective learning and teaching. The Principal has the sole responsibility of allocating SNA support throughout the school. The allocation will be reviewed annually.

### **Prevention Strategies**

As a means of preventing the occurrence of learning difficulties, the following strategies will be used:

- The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to language development e.g. phonological awareness
- Development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to maths e.g. Maths language, procedures and methodologies

- Class based early intervention by class teacher in language and maths, resulting in the provision of individualised planning and teaching
- Promotion of parental involvement through an induction meeting and parent/teacher meetings
- Implementation of shared reading programmes
- On going observation and assessment by class teacher in all areas e.g. physical, disadvantage, sensory, speech and language, emotional, behavioural etc

### **Referral to out of school agencies**

Children may be referred to out side agencies after class and SEN intervention (Stages 1 and 2 of Staged approach) have failed to address the pupils' needs.

- The SET and class teacher will meet with the parents to discuss the need for referral and to seek their consent
- The Class teacher and Set will complete the necessary referral forms in consultation with the Principal and parents
- The SET and Principal co-ordinate the referral of pupils to outside agencies e.g. NEPS Educational Psychologist, Area Medical Officer. Access to outside agencies will be dependent on resources made available by the DES and/or HSE
- The relevant support professional may visit and/or liaise with the school.
- A meeting of the above personnel will be requested with the Principal, Class teacher, SET and parents
- Recommendations will be considered and appropriate planning will take place to address the needs of the pupil.
- A review will be requested as needed and recommended before child transfers to Post Primary School

### **Provision of Supplementary Teaching**

- In Stage 1 it is the responsibility of the class teacher to implement a support programme for the pupil, though the plan may be devised with the help of one of the SET team. This may require adapted methodologies, differentiated curriculum etc.
- In Stage 2 support will be provided by the SET and may take place outside or inside the pupil's classroom and may be on an individual or

- group basis. Special Education Teachers will be deployed in a flexible manner. In class support is the preferred option and will be used where possible. However, where the pupil identified as needing support is not benefiting from in class support he/she may be withdrawn from the class for a period of time.
- Contact time between SET and pupil being supported will be for a minimum of 1.5 hours per week.
  - The class teacher and SET , in consultation with the Principal and parents will meet to devise an IPLP, IEP or GEP for each pupil receiving support
  - The plan is monitored through teacher observation, progress records, testing and checklists
  - A detailed review will take place at the end of each instructional term. The review document will record specifically what each child can do.
  - The SET and Class teacher will meet with the parents to discuss progress after this review i.e. at the end of each term. These meetings will be arranged by the class teacher.
  - The Set will maintain the following in the pupil's file
    - IPLP/IEP/GEP
    - Short term planning and programme record
    - Other records
    - Samples of written work
    - Reading analysis records
    - Results of screening/standardised/diagnostic tests
- Class teachers will have a copy of the IEP/GEP set out for each S.N. child in their classroom.

### **IPLPs/IEPs/GEPs/Pupil Profiles**

IPLPs, IEPs and GEps will be in accordance with the Learning Support Guidelines issued by the DES in 2000, Disability Bill and Circular 02/05. The plans will address the pupils' needs and learning priorities. The SET will meet with the class teacher and SNA at the beginning of each term to plan a work schedule. Plans will be evaluated regularly and adjusted if the child's needs necessitate it. The plan/profile will include:

- Child's personal details
- Assessment results
- Information from previous teachers
- Other relevant information

- Reports from other agencies
- Learning Strengths and attainments
- Priority Learning Needs
- Differentiation Strategies
- Learning Targets
- Learning Strategies appropriate for the child
- Class based learning activities
- Any exemptions that may be in place
- Supplementary Support activities
- Type of support e.g. In class- group 4 times per week
- Resources available
- Home Support Activities

The S.E.T. will keep one copy. Class teachers will also have a copy. Parents will be offered a copy by the class teacher.

### **Special Needs Pupils transferring from another school**

Parents of a pupil with Special Needs transferring from another school are asked to provide the school with copies of all reports regarding the needs of the child. If resources have been granted to the previous school, for the benefit of the child a new application will be made to the SENO for those resources to be continued after the transfer. Pupils transferring who had been receiving Learning Support in the previous school will continue to get support if they meet the criteria set out in this policy.

### **Procedures for continuing/ Discontinuing Support for Pupils**

The decision to continue/discontinue providing Learning Support will be based on the following criteria:

- Does the pupil still meet the criteria as set down in allocation of places for children with SEN?
- Has account been taken of the overall SEN demands in the school? Circumstances may change - if a more urgent need presents itself support for some children could be reduced.
- Has the pupil achieved some/all of the learning targets?
- Will the pupil be able to cope independently in the classroom?

An appropriate diagnostic test will be administered to a pupil before he/she is dropped from Learning Support.

Ideally, children should not remain in Learning Support for more than 2 consecutive years

The decision to continue/discontinue should be made by the SET, class teacher and Principal in consultation with the parents  
Pupils may return to Learning Support if they fail to make progress in the classroom

### **Timetabling**

- The SET and Class teacher will agree times for the withdrawal of pupils or for in class support
- The timetable will be drawn up in consultation with the Principal
- The class teacher and the Principal will be given a copy of each SET's timetable
- If pupils are being withdrawn, care must be taken to ensure that pupils are not missing the same subject on a regular basis
- Times will be arranged each term so that class teachers can meet and plan with the SET and SNA. Parents will be invited to attend and contribute to the IEP process at the beginning of each school year.

### **Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

The development, planning and implementation of the Special Education Needs programme is a collaborative responsibility shared by The Board of Management, Principal, SET, Class Teachers, Parents, and Pupils and in some cases the SNA

#### **Board of Management**

- Oversee the development, implementation of the Special Education Needs programme
- Ensure adequate classroom accommodation and facilities to allow for the service to be implemented
- Provide a secure facility for the storage of records relating to SEN pupils
- Support ongoing Professional Development for SET staff
- Ratify the Special Education Needs Policy and initiate a review in line with changing guidelines

#### **Principal**

- Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policy on SEN, in cooperation with the BoM, Teachers, parents and pupils

- Work with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan in the context of Special Needs
- Monitor implementation of the programme
- Monitor selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that those in receipt of support are those in most need
- Oversee the implementation of a whole school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with learning difficulties and low achievement
- The Principal has responsibility for allocating S.E.T. and SNA support to S.E.N. pupils.
- Keep Teachers informed about external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed in initiating referrals
- Liaise with NEPS, SENO, Cigire Scoile etc.

#### **Class Teacher**

- Operate a differentiated programme for learning as necessary for the Special Needs Pupil
- Implement strategies initiated by the SET, designed to assist the S.N. pupil access the curriculum.
- Have primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils, including those selected for supplementary teaching
- Support and implement the school plan with the special needs child
- Implement teaching programmes which optimise learning for all pupils and which, as far as possible, prevent the emergence of learning difficulties
- Implement school policies on screening and pupil selection for supplementary teaching in literacy and maths. For this purpose Micra -T and Sigma -T will be administered to all children from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class in October each year
- Collaborate with the SET in the development of an IEP/IPLP by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve these targets
- The Class Teacher is responsible for keeping parents informed and will communicate an up to date progress report to them.  
(See under Provision of Supplementary Teaching)

### **Special Education Teacher**

- Assist in the implementation of a broad range of whole school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to prevent learning difficulties
- Development of individual profile and learning programmes for pupils who are selected for supplementary teaching, in consultation with the class teacher and parents
- Maintaining planning and progress records or equivalent for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of Special Education
- Delivering early intervention programmes and providing supplementary teaching in English, Mathematics and modification programmes (e.g. behaviour) to selected pupils who are experiencing learning difficulties
- Co-ordinating the implementation of whole school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching
- Contributing to the development of the policy on Special Education at the whole school level
- Providing advice to the class teacher in areas such as pupil assessment, programme planning, language development, reading, writing and maths for pupils experiencing learning difficulties
- To identify the child's learning style and to communicate with the class teacher how best this can be accommodated in the classroom.
- Contributing at school level to decision making regarding the purchase of learning resources, books and materials etc.
- Liaising with external agencies such as NEPS, Speech and Language therapist etc.

### **Implementation and Review**

The implementation of this policy will commence in 2008/2009 and it will be implemented in full by the end of 2009/2010. The policy will be reviewed in line with any new directives from the DES.

### **Ratification**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management