

St. Mary's Secondary School Special Educational Needs Policy

Mission Statement and aims of the school

In keeping with the spirit of Catherine McAuley, the Foundress of the Mercy Sisters, our school is committed to academic development, while also nurturing the spiritual, physical, creative and emotional needs and abilities of each student in a secure environment.

Our policy on special needs will comply with the inclusive ethos of our school as expressed in the Mission Statement ie that the school provides for all students including those with special needs.

Purpose

- To identify students with special educational needs, including those deemed to be 'Gifted & Talented' and provide support in as far as possible and practicable for those students at St Mary's Secondary School
- To codify current procedures and practices in the school
- To comply with current regulations and legislation in this area

Rationale

The school will endeavour to use its available resources to ensure that "the educational needs of all students, including those with special education needs are identified and provided for" EA 1998 (9)

Legal Context

The policy has been prepared with reference to the following legislation:

- The Education Act 1998 (EA)
- The Education Welfare Act 2000 (EWA)
- The Equal Status Act 2000 (ESA)
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (ESPEN)

Definition of Special Educational Needs

"Special educational needs means, in relation to a person, a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition" EPSEN 2004, 1-(1). Section 7 4(b) of ESA 2000 indicates a category of special needs with regard to persons with emotional behavioural difficulties and the school will also be mindful of students with such difficulties. Furthermore, EA 1998 recognises "giftedness" as a special education condition and the school will endeavour to support students who fit into this category

Goals

- To ensure entitlement and access for pupils with special educational needs to a high quality education with a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, so that they can reach their potential and enhance their self esteem.
- To educate students with learning difficulties, wherever possible, alongside their peers within the mainstream curriculum after giving due consideration to the education psychologist and the ability to meet individual needs.
- To identify and assess pupils as early and thoroughly as is possible and necessary in order to ensure that those needs can be supported
- To involve parents and students in the identification, assessment and delivery of Learning Support and to strive for close co-operation between all concerned and for a multi-disciplinary approach to the resolution of issues.

- To meet the needs of all students who have learning difficulties, by offering continual and appropriate forms of educational provision by the most efficient use of all available resources.

Objectives

- To achieve their potential within the education and examination system, in as inclusive an environment as possible as far as is practicable.
- To encourage and maintain regular attendance.
- To aim to make them valued members of school and the wider community.
- The Board of Management will ensure that the policies and practices in the school are inclusive and in compliance with legislation in the area

Principal

The Principal will ensure that the school is fully accessible to all students and has responsibility for the following tasks:

- The provision of all Learning Support in the school, through the delegation of specific roles as outlined below.
- The allocation of learning support hours to teachers
- The employment of teachers to fill the DES provision
- Applications for grants and appropriate equipment for Learning Support
- Timetabling provision for Learning Support
- The Submission of SN1 and SN2 forms, application for hours for newcomers and travellers and SNA applications
- Subject options and the setting of class groups
- Liaising with external service providers: NEPS, SENO, HSE etc
- The development of the Learning Support policy
- Organisation, in conjunction with the Learning Support Co-ordinator, of individual assessments with NEPS
- Informing parents/guardians on special needs provision in the school during initial interview.
- Log and monitor all students deemed to have special educational needs on an overview document and update this regularly to ensure full provision available to all.
- Ensure CAT4 testing and retesting takes place in 1st Year and TY and use this information to best support individual students.

Learning support Co-ordinator

The Learning Support Co-ordinator has responsibility for the following tasks:

- Co-ordination of the Learning Support Department
- The Learning Support timetable
- The collection of assessments of incoming students
- Working with parents and feeder schools in planning for students with SEN
- Preparation of Referral Forms/Consent Forms for NEPS assessment
- Liaising with NEPS psychologist and visiting teachers
- The provision of resources for Learning Support in the school
- Teaching of individual and small groups of students requiring learning support
- Provision of pastoral care to students with SEN
- Attend weekly timetabled meetings with the Principal

Learning Support Teachers

Members of the Learning Support Team will be responsible for:

- Teaching of individual and small groups of students requiring learning support
- Administering of screening tests for incoming students
- Taking part in team teaching

- Completing a progress report on each student receiving learning support in January/February and a final one in April/May. These reports enable the learning support co-ordinator to assess progress and provide ongoing support if deemed necessary.

Subject Teachers

The EPSEN Act (2004) states that students with special needs shall whenever possible be educated in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs. Circular 24/03 on special education directs that regardless of what special educational need a child may have, or who may be involved in supporting that need, the classroom subject teacher retains primary responsibility for all the students in his/her classroom.

Parental Involvement

As primary educators of the student, the school recognises the central importance of the involvement of parents/guardians in addressing the special educational needs of students in the school. The school believes that the effectiveness of any intervention will be influenced by the involvement and interest of the child and his parents/guardians. Parents/Guardians are invited to contact the Learning Support Department during the year in addition to meeting teachers at parent teacher meetings. Parents are always contacted if a student is to be referred for assessment, and written consent is required for assessment to be carried out and for referral to other agencies, and afterwards to discuss the outcome of the assessment and the student's ongoing progress. When a First Year student requests or is recommended to give up a continental language in order to receive Learning Support, parents are invited to discuss the matter and are required to give written consent for withdrawal. See Appendix

Student Involvement

Normally, students are informed of their placement in special needs groupings by the Learning Support Co-ordinator. Usually, students will know, coming into school, that they have an Educational Assessment and will have spoken to the relevant personnel along with their parents/guardians as part of the transition process.

In the case of a student who is referred for assessment through the school, the Principal of the Learning Support Co-ordination team will discuss with the parent/guardian regarding the best way to approach informing the student.

Links with Outside Agencies & Services

In accordance with the EPSEN Act (2004), the school will work with the SENO, NEPS psychologist, visiting teachers, the Social Welfare Department and the Health Service Executive and any other relevant professionals in providing an integrated response to the needs of any particular student. It will be customary to hold such case meetings with relevant professionals with the permission of the student's parent/guardians (and their attendance where possible) in order to determine the best approach and provision for the student in question. The arrangement for such meetings will be co-ordinated by the Principal and permission sought from the parents in advance. The Learning Support Co-ordinator will record notes from such meetings. Meetings involving parents, NEPS psychologist, principal, tutors, year head, school counsellor, resource team are arranged when appropriate or as requested by the NEPS psychologist to determine the best approach to meet the needs of the student in question. In the event of a special needs student or a student with a physical disability, a visual impairment or a hearing deficit etc enrolling in the school, the learning support team together with the principal, would contact the appropriate outside agencies in order that relevant supports available are put in place to meet the needs of the student.

Strategy for Identification and Selection of students with Special Needs

The school seeks to identify and assess students with learning difficulties as early and thoroughly as is possible in order to ensure that the needs of the student can be properly supported.

The school will meet with the parents and the former school(s) attended by the students as early as possible, requesting all relevant information and reports in order to properly identify and assess the special needs. (EWA, 7a). This dialogue will begin at a meeting with the Principal prior to enrolment, when parents/guardians are asked to provide any educational assessments and discuss the students needs with the Principal and members of the Learning Support Department if their presence is required.

Based on the educational assessments furnished to the Principal the school may request the DES to provide resources such as specialised equipment, special needs assistants (SNA), resource hours etc. in order to enable the school to discharge its duties adequately.

The school understands that its ability to respond to the educational needs of any student applying for admission depends on the ability of the DES to supply the appropriate facilities and resources to allow the school to support the specific needs. It may be necessary for the Board of Management to defer enrolment of a student pending provision of appropriate resource by the DES to meet the needs of the particular student.

Strategy

- Initials screening tests are administered to incoming first years in January preceding enrolment - CAT4 and GRTII . Bearing in mind the mixed ability composition of classes in 1st Year, this assessment is used to indicate particular learning aptitudes students may have
- A reading test is administered in second year. GRTII (x,y). The NRIT is used to assist diagnosis where applicable
- Diagnostic testing e.g. The Parallel Spelling Test is used to determine whether a student may need to be assessed for a specific learning difficulty

The Learning Support Co-ordinator, having regard to the CAT4 results and the results of the other screening tests may refer students for assessment by NEPS in consultation with the Principal. Priority is given to students whose verbal or numerical attainment is significantly below their peers.

The screening is also used to establish the reading and numerical ages of the students so as to assist in planning for students with special needs.

Collaboration with subject teachers and year heads is also used to identify students with learning difficulties. Teachers refer students to the Learning Support Department on the basis of concerns regarding literacy and numerical ability.

The Learning Support Department also rely on Christmas Teat results of First Years to determine how students are progressing. These results may highlight other students who have learning difficulties.

Students and/or their parents may also request assistance regarding learning support. Permission form parents/guardians will always be sought before the referral of a student to NEPS. The official referral forms will be viewed and signed by the parent/guardian before the student sees the NEPS Psychologist.

Learning Support/Resource Currently Available

- Resource – following consultation with primary schools and provision of a psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support/Resource Teaching and who have been granted resource hours in either the low or high incidence categories. Students who do not have an assessment but who have received learning support in primary school will be given consideration in as far as resources allow.

- Referrals by school as students are identified with learning difficulties.
- Traveller hours – when, if required, but mindful of promoting integration within mainstream classes.
- Remedial hours (11 hours)
- Students whose first language is not English and who have been granted hours by the DES for language acquisition.
- Students who have been identified in the screening tests who are under the 10th percentile and who in consultations with parents and teachers are viewed as requiring support.
- Consideration will also be given to students with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- SNA access and support
- ASDAN Programme

In allocating resources priority will be given to students

- In the low incidence and high incidence categories and those to whom hours have been granted by the SENO
- Afterwards to those with assessments though not granted hours.
- Thereafter to those requiring intervention in so far as resources allow

Learning support will be withdrawn from a student when the Learning Support Department, in consultation with the Principal consider that the student concerned is in a position to access the curriculum without support.

Support Currently in place for Students with Learning Difficulties

- We prioritise literacy and numeracy across the curriculum through our whole-school policies.
- SNA access and support
- Learning Support on an individual and small group basis
- ASDAN Programme

First Years

- Following consultation with teachers and assessment of Christmas reports, students experiencing difficulty are allowed give up a language that they do not intend to take to Junior Cert Level. These class periods are then devoted to additional classes in literacy and Maths.
- Students who are entitled to resource hours and who present with poor organisational, homework skills, ADHD are given at least one class period to help with homework and develop self-management skills.

Second Years

- On entry to second year, students will have selected their elective subjects (Business, Home Economics, Art, Music) along with the core subjects (Irish, English, Maths, RS, CSPE, History, Geography, Science, French/Spanish).
- All students are encouraged to take Irish and a continental language in so far as it is practical and possible. When resources allow students may be afforded in class support by a support teacher. In exceptional circumstances a special needs student may be allowed to drop a continental language. During this lesson period, she will be withdrawn individually or in a small group and receive support in areas where she is experiencing difficulty.
- All students select the level at which they will study Maths and Irish and are grouped accordingly into Higher and Ordinary levels.

Third Years

- Class are grouped into Higher, Ordinary and Foundation levels in Maths and Irish
- Students remain in mixed ability group for English unless a sufficient number to form a separate class become available to take Ordinary/Foundation level
- Where extra resource time is available, students in exam classes are prioritised and given help in certain subjects especially classes of mixed ability groupings.

Fifth and Sixth Years

- Students in receipt of resources continue to receive their entitlements during the senior cycle.
- At Leaving Cert level, weaker students who are experiencing difficulty in any subject are given as much assistance as is practical and possible. This takes the form of withdrawal and or parallel/small grouping class.

Success Criteria

- Bi annual progress reports on students in receipt of resource hours from teachers involved. See Report Form Appendix B
- Class tests also indicate whether the students is benefiting from this intervention
- Completed projects/assessments/journals for state examinations
- Willingness of students to sit for and succeed in state examinations
- In the case of students in receipt of pastoral support, success is measured by their ability to remain and cope within the school system and to cope in life situations in which they find themselves
- Learning support team liaise with the Guidance Councillor, NEPS and relevant outside agencies when and if necessary
- End of year results in school and State Exams indicate level of success

Monitoring, Implementation & Evaluation of the Policy

Monitoring and evaluation of interventions for students will be conducted as an integral part of the programme in place as described in the role of the Learning Support teacher. Student progress will also be monitored through subject teacher assessment in the usual manner.

Monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of procedures adopted under this policy, will be done twice yearly using all available and relevant data. The Learning Support Department will conduct a yearly review of procedures in May of each year on the basis of which proposals for development and improvement will be adopted.

The following people are involved – the Principal, in conjunction with the Learning Support Team, who would have ongoing contact with subject teachers, year heads and the Home School Liaison teacher and Guidance Counsellor

Reporting back to Senior Management & the Board of Management

Written reports by all teachers involved in learning support are given to the Principal. Regular meetings between the Principal and learning support teachers ensure that all relevant stakeholders are informed. The Principal holds regular meeting with the BOM.

Security of Individual Files

Individual files are kept on each student who has engaged with the Learning Support Department in the school. Information in the files includes psychological reports, results from screening test, diagnostic tests, in school assessments, correspondence between the school, parents, and other relevant agencies, and applications for support and concessions. Individual student files are secured in a locked filing cabinet in the Learning Support Room.

Communication of information to Subject Teachers

The following staff members will have access to students individual files, the Principal, the Deputy Principal, members of the Learning Support Team, the Career Guidance Counsellor and the Year heads. In accordance with Section 14.1 (d) of the EPSEN Act (2004) the school “shall ensure that all relevant teachers and other relevant employees of the school are aware of the special educational needs of students”. Communication of needs of individual students to there is carried out at the staff meeting at the start of each school year. It is the responsibility of individual subject teachers to request further information form the Learning Support Team.

Review

The Principal and the Learning Support Team review the policy and evaluate the success of policy implementation on an ongoing basis.

Signature of the Chair _____ Date _____

Signature of the Principal _____ Date _____

