

St. Patrick's SNS Special Needs and Learning Support Policy

This policy was devised with the cooperation of the principal, resource and learning support teachers and members of staff and it was last updated in September 2016.

1. Context

St. Patrick's S.N.S. is a senior mixed primary school situated in the parish of Corduff. It has a current enrolment of approximately 233 pupils and a teaching staff of 20, including a special class teacher, 4 S.N.A's, a secretary and a caretaker. The school has disadvantaged status and falls into DEIS Band 1. The school population include children from the travelling community and a high number of children from the international community.

2. Beliefs and Principles

St. Patrick's S.N.S. is a co-educational, Catholic Primary School which strives to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed. We strive to provide for the holistic development of the child in a positive, secure environment.

3. Rationale

This policy is necessary to keep St. Patrick's S.N.S. up to date and in line with current trends in Special Education and to help us with the following:

- Complying with current legislation and department circulars.
- Reviewing our existing policy.

4. Aims for Learning Support and Special Needs Education

The principal aim of all learning support is to optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable all pupils with special educational needs to experience success at school and where possible to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school. The school will aim:

- a) To identify children experiencing learning difficulties and to put in place appropriate learning support for these children.
- b) To adapt the curriculum where necessary to meet the needs of children experiencing learning difficulties.
- c) To develop the self esteem of each child.
- d) To work closely with parents/guardians as partners in their child's education.
- e) To enable pupils attending Learning Support/Resource/Special Class to participate as much as possible in the full curriculum for their class level.

- f) To provide supplementary teaching and additional support and resources with a priority for the areas of English and Mathematics for those pupils identified as needing Learning Support.
- g) To establish early intervention programmes e.g., First Steps, paired reading, designed to enhance learning and to prevent/reduce difficulties in learning.
- h) To enable collaboration among teachers in the implementation of the whole school policies on Learning Support for these pupils.
- i) To establish communication for the involvement of professionals and others with expertise in the area of Special Needs.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Board of Management**

The board has responsibility to oversee the implementation of the school policy on Learning Support and Special Needs.

- **Principal**

The principal has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school policy on Learning Support and Special Needs.

- **Class Teacher**

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her classroom, including those selected for supplementary resource teaching/special class.

- **Learning Support Team**

The Learning Support Teacher has responsibility for:

- a) Co-ordinating whole school screening and testing in order to identify children who should receive Learning Support.
- b) Further testing (standardised, criterion based and diagnostic) of children who have been identified as needing Learning Support.
- c) Devising and implementing learning plans for those attending learning support.
- d) Monitoring and recording progress of pupils attending learning support.
- e) Recommending to classroom teachers suitable approaches and materials for children attending learning support.
- f) Consult with the parents of pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching (through the HSCL teacher if necessary) to identify ways in which parents can support the attainment of learning targets in their child's Individual Profile and Learning Programme.

- g) Encourage parents to participate in programmes organised by the HSCL teacher that enhance learning at home and in school.

- **Resource Teacher / Special Needs**

Only pupils who have been appropriately assessed and who meet the relevant criteria for a diagnosis of a learning difficulty under one or more of the disabilities outlined in Department Circular 0802 may receive provision from the Special Needs/Resource Teacher.

Pupils may receive an exemption from the study of Irish according to circular 12/96 if

- They function intellectually at average or above average level but have a specific learning disability of such a degree of severity that they fail to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic language skills in the mother tongue, or
- They have been assessed as having a general learning disability due to serious intellectual impairment and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue, or
- Who have been assessed as having a general learning disability due to serious sensory impairment, and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue.

The Special Needs / Resource Teacher has responsibility for:

1. Liaising with parent(s) / guardians, class teacher(s), students, other relevant professionals such as psychologists, speech therapists, visiting teachers, special schools in order to:
 - a) Identify the child's strengths and needs.
 - b) Prioritise needs.
 - c) Select priority needs for I.E.P. (Individual Education Plan).
 - d) Determine current performance level (base line)*.
 - e) Devise I.E.P. specifying long term goals, objectives, teaching methods/strategies, materials/equipment and monitoring procedures.
 - f) Liaise with class teachers with regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, suitable textbooks, use of ICT and suitable software and a range of other related matters.
 - g) Teach and review I.E.P.

*Base line level plus direction of I.E.P. ascertained through diagnostic testing in September and February. Updated abridged I.E.P. devised in February.

5. Identification and Selection of Pupils for Supplementary Teaching

The school currently administers the Drumcondra Reading and Mathematics Tests towards the end of the school year for children in 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th. New admissions after September will be tested shortly after arrival if scores cannot be gained from previous schools. Priority for receiving supplementary teaching will be given to children who score a percentile less than 10 in the Drumcondra test. These guidelines in test results are flexible and the professional judgement of classroom teachers will be a crucial part of the selection process.

The learning support teacher may then administer one or all of the following tests to these children:

Mathematics:

1. Westwood One Minute Basic Number Facts Tests
2. Drumcondra
3. Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT 4) Math Computation subtest; part 1: Oral Computation, part 2: Math Computation

English:

1. Drumcondra
2. New Non-Reading Intelligence Test (NNRIT)
3. Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA II)
4. Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)
5. YORK Assessment for Reading Comprehension (Starting September 2015)
6. WRAT 3 subtests:
 - Word Reading
 - Sentence Comprehension
 - Spelling

When selecting children to attend Learning Support, the following criteria will be applied.

- a) Pupils may attend for both English and Maths when required.
- b) The order of learning priority when selecting pupils will be as follows:
 - < 10th percentile for literacy and numeracy
- c) The emphasis will be on early intervention in 3rd and 4th classes, as studies have shown that early intervention is more effective than later intervention.
- d) The optimum group size is 3-4 when possible. Where a pupil does not make satisfactory progress in a small group setting, consideration may be given to providing individual teaching.

6. Procedures for early identification/screening/referral of special needs pupils from within the school

- Teacher observation will play a major part in identifying children who may require special needs input.
- Standardised testing from 3rd to 6th: Drumcondra and (NRIT for 3rd).
- Communication with parents is an essential part of this process. Parents will be kept informed and consulted with regard to any concerns the school may have. The HSCCL teacher often visits parents in this regard.
- Depending on the outcome of teacher observation and testing, it may be considered appropriate to refer the child for a psychological assessment by an educational psychologist. Again this decision will be a collaborative effort between parents and school.
- The school maintains communication with the NEPS psychologists throughout the school year. Throughout the year, the psychologist visits the school on a number of days to carry out pre-arranged assessments, reviews or observations of children who are giving cause for concern.

7. Provision of supplementary teaching

Following further analysis of learning needs and difficulties, children are grouped according to their needs. Supplementary teaching will then be provided in English and Maths. The teaching provided is supplementary (i.e. in addition to) class teaching in English and Maths. It is not designed to replace classroom work in these subjects. Children may be withdrawn from their class in timetabled groups for learning support lessons or may be taught within the classroom alternatively.

8. Continuing/Discontinuing supplementary teaching

Children selected for supplementary teaching will attend for an instructional period lasting a minimum of 12 weeks. At the end of this period progress will be reviewed with the class teacher and Learning Support Team. Supplementary Teaching will then be withdrawn or continued as appropriate. Parents shall be informed of the review and the course of action to be taken.

9. Record Keeping/Monitoring Progress

Every child receiving Learning Support has a folder. The Learning Support Teacher/Resource Teacher/Special Needs Teacher will compile an individual profile of each child containing test results, reading records and progress of each child attending Learning Support/Special Needs/Resource. Learning Support Teacher (IPLP). Resource Teacher/Special Needs Teacher (IEP). Psychological reports will be securely stored.

10. Liaising with parents/links with outside agencies

The Principal/Learning Support/Special Needs/ Resource Teacher will communicate regularly with parents regarding the selection and progress of children attending Learning Support/Special Needs and Resource.

The Learning Support Teacher & Classroom Teacher will have responsibility for (with parental consent), communication with outside agencies and co-ordinating pupil support services e.g. psychological assessments, speech therapy and child and family services.

11. Monitoring and Reviews of Policy

The implementation of the policy will be constantly monitored and will be reviewed every year. This policy will take effect from October 2013 and has been reviewed in September 2016.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Patrick's S.N.S. at its meeting on _____ . Parents may view this policy on the school website or by appointment with the Principal.

Date: _____

Fr. Liam McClarey

Chairperson of the Board of Management