

Réalt Na Mara
Girls' National School
Mornington



Special Education
Policy

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 School Context

Réalt na Mara Girls' National School is in Mornington, Co. Meath. The school is under the patronage of the Meath Diocese. It is a girls' vertical school, and at the time of revising the policy in 2023, has an enrolment of 432 children.

1.2 School Staffing

For 2022/23, there is a total of 25 teachers on staff in the school. This staff consists of the administrative principal, 18 mainstream class teachers, 7.5 SNA allocation, 3.90 Special Education teachers (x1 is shared with a local school for 0.3 days per week), 2 SET in Cua Réaltaí (ASD special classes) and 0.2 EAL teacher for Ukrainian pupils (for 2022/2023 only).

1.3 Rationale for Special Needs Policy

This policy has been devised in accordance with Department Circulars regarding Special Needs Education.

1.4 Policy Aims

- To enable pupils of all abilities to avail of and benefit from an appropriate education
- To outline the whole school approach to the identification, teaching and learning of pupils with SEN.

1.5 Communication of Policy

This policy is available on the school website for wider school community access. The policy is shared with all staff members on the school's Teacher Share Internal Server as part of the School Plan. A hard copy of the policy is available in the Teachers' Policy Folder.

1.6 Implementation and Review This policy was drafted and ratified in 2014. The staged approach to the Continuum of Support was added to the policy in 2018. This policy has been reviewed in January 2023.

2.1 Inclusion commitment

The NCSE (2011) defines **inclusion** as a process of *addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners. It involves removing barriers so that each learner will be enabled to achieve the maximum benefit from her schooling.*

The school's whole-school approach to special educational needs provision reflects a systems' commitment to the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in our mainstream classes. This whole school approach endeavours to foster an inclusive culture which is characterised by:

- A positive ethos and learning environment whereby all pupils, including those with special educational needs, feel welcome and experience a sense of community and belonging.
- An emphasis on promoting pupils' participation and active engagement in their learning and in the life of the school.
- A commitment to developing pupils' academic, social, emotional and independent living skills.
- A focus on high aspirations and on improving outcomes for all pupils.

The use of early-intervention and prevention approaches in the school help mitigate the development of learning, social and emotional difficulties later on for many of the pupils they transition to middle and senior classes. The following approaches are used in our school:

2.2 Positive Learning Environment

Teachers continually make adjustments in their classrooms to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for pupils. They vary classroom seating, activities and task instructions, considering the needs of all pupils, teachers in the school are mindful of the need to be aware of classroom organisation, teaching and learning styles. A **Learning Environment Checklist** and **My Thoughts About School Checklist** to promote ongoing reflection and follow-on actions are available in **Appendix 1**.

2.3 Differentiation

Mainstream class teachers cater for pupils with a wide range of abilities and needs who have a diverse range of personal/home experiences. Pupils vary in their learning rates and styles.

Differentiation is about matching teaching strategies, approaches and expectations to the range of experiences, abilities, needs and learning styles in a mainstream class. In other words, different teaching methods and approaches work with different pupils. The class teachers use the results in the Drumcondra Standardised tests as one means to plan differentiation for their pupils. Differentiation is an important means by which a teacher can show each pupil that they are respected and valued. The needs of the majority of pupils within a mainstream class can be met by differentiating teaching approaches for that class.

S.E.T team and class teachers use station teaching as an approach to support literacy and numeracy learning. S.E.T team and class teachers will decide when station teaching is used and its duration. The S.E.T team will support the class teacher in the provision of the station teaching. Before station teaching is planned for a class, the S.E.T team and class teacher will analyse the Drumcondra standardised test scores and/or administer diagnostic tests to identify specific classes or groups within a class who would benefit from in-class support

The following timetable outlines the school's station teaching programme:

- Term 1: Lift-Off to Literacy-1st class x2
- Term 1: Mata sa Rang-2nd Class x2
- Term 2 : Lift-Off to literacy- Senior Infants x2
- Term 2: Mata sa Rang-3rd Class x2
- Term 3: Junior Infants-Early Intervention
- Term 3: Literacy/ Maths-Senior classes

2.5 In-Class S.E.T. support

S.E.T. teachers may support identified individuals/groups within the class setting. This will take the format of team teaching /parallel teaching/support teaching. Both the class teacher and S.E.T teacher will work collaboratively to plan and identify objectives.

2.6 English as an Additional Language

The S.E.T teacher assists the school in providing additional EAL support teaching for pupils. In collaboration with parents and mainstream class teachers, S.E.T. identifies pupils requiring additional language support. S.E.T./EAL teacher assesses pupils' proficiency in English using the Primary Language Assessment Toolkit (DES), devises appropriate language programmes, delivers the programmes and records and monitors pupils' progress. Communication with the child's parents is recognised as an essential part of the link between school and home. A variety of strategies are used including: engaging the services of a translator, pictorial representation of progress, inviting parents to view samples of child's work. The EAL provision remains the responsibility of the mainstream class teacher. In 2022 the school received 1 hour per week teacher allocation for the teaching of Ukrainian pupils (5 hours) and Syrian pupils (5 hours). A specific EAL teacher has been employed for this purpose. Students will only receive these hours in the first year of their schooling.

3.1 Introduction to the Continuum

Some pupils within a mainstream class will have distinct or individual special educational needs (SEN).

‘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 and cognate words shall be construed accordingly.’

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN),

In meeting the needs of these pupils, class teachers typically consider alternative strategies within the classroom and provide a more individualised approach.

A smaller number of pupils have special educational needs that require support from other teachers within the SEN team and/or from professionals outside the school community in addition to the support provided by their class teacher.

This section of the policy sets out how the school uses the Continuum of Support to provide for pupils requiring more intensive support for their learning.

3.2 Principles guiding SEN provision in the school

- Resources provided to support pupils with special educational needs are used to facilitate the development of a truly inclusive school.
- Supports provided to pupils with special educational needs are based on identified needs and are informed by regular and collaborative reviews of learning progress.
- The class teacher has primary responsibility for the learning progress and care of all pupils in her classroom including those with special educational needs.
- The revised SEN allocation model facilitates the school to deploy SETs according to identified needs rather than being based on a diagnosis of disability. This gives the school greater autonomy and flexibility in how SET resources are allocated. The school deploys SETs in a variety of ways to effectively meet pupils’ needs. These include in-class support, group and individual withdrawal.
- Special education teaching supports are used exclusively to support pupils with identified special educational needs, including those pupils for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL).
- Pupils with the greatest levels of need have access to the greatest level of support. Support in reading and maths is prioritised for those pupils who score below the 20th percentile in the standardised tests.
- A mix of in-class and withdrawal support models are used depending on what is identified as most appropriate for the child.
- Effective communication and engagement with parents is critically important in moving towards a needs-based approach to the allocation of additional teaching resources. This is enhanced when teachers consult with parents in relation to the drafting and review of pupil support plans.

encouraged to engage in continuing professional development to ensure that best quality support is available to meet the diverse needs of pupils.

- The Principal and S.E.N. coordinator endeavour to inform the S.E.N Team and staff of C.P.D. opportunities, especially when a training opportunity arises for the particular caseload.

3.3 Continuum of Support

The Continuum of Support framework enables teachers to identify and respond appropriately to a pupil's emerging special educational learning needs. These needs range across the cognitive, the social, the emotional and the behavioural and include physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties.

The Continuum of Support framework recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long term, and that pupils require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs. This framework helps to ensure that interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive support, and that they are informed by careful monitoring of learning progress.

The term **support** refers to both assessment and intervention. The focus is on identifying actions which can be taken to make a positive difference to the pupil/s. These actions are identified using a problem solving approach. An **incrementally more systematic process** will be put in place depending on where the pupil's needs lie on the continuum in terms of intensity and duration.

For every stage of the continuum, the same thematic questions guide the thinking and action process at each level of support:

What is the concern? Identify the issue.

Why is it happening? Gather and analyse data.

How can we help? Identifying a small number of actions which can be taken to make a positive difference

Did it work? Review the progress of individual pupils

Useful Resources:

*Special Educational Needs - A Continuum of Support: Guidelines for teachers - Primary Schools in **Appendix 2.***

*Special Educational Needs- A Continuum of Support - Resource Pack for Teachers - Primary Schools in **Appendix 3.***

Classroom Support is an intervention process coordinated by the class teacher and carried within the regular classroom. Classroom based support is provided for mild and/or transitory need.

Classroom Support is the most common, and typically the first response to emerging need is a response for pupils who have distinct or individual educational or social, emotional, behavioural needs and who require approaches to learning and/or behaviour which are additional to or different from those required by other pupils in their class.

Starting point – when a teacher, parent or other professional expresses a concern about a pupil. Concerns may be around social, emotional, behavioural or academic issues. A classroom support plan is developed and / or adjusted over time for those pupils who require a differentiated programme above and beyond the normal whole class differentiation strategies.

Differentiation: Before moving to a classroom support plan, consider the extent the normal differentiation is having an impact:

- Do the skills and behaviours fall within the typical range for her age?
- Do gaps in skills and behaviours impact negatively on learning and socialisation?
- Does she respond to my simple interventions?

If yes to the above questions, continue with differentiation.

If no, move to a classroom support plan. This plan should outline the pupil's needs and the actions which will be implemented by the class teacher

Steps to be taken by the class teacher when drafting, implementing and reviewing a Classroom Support Plan:

1. Identify the issue e.g. decoding. Needs are identified by the class teacher. There is no requirement for external professional reports.
2. Gather evidence of the pupil's baseline performance. Depending on the issue, one or more of the following evidence gathering methods will be used.
 - Parent/teacher consultation – *pupil's health / early development; likely contributing factors; home experiences; what might help.*
 - Teacher observation records
 - Teacher-designed measures/assessments
 - Basic needs checklist
 - Learning environment checklist
 - Pupil consultation - My Thoughts About School Checklist
 - Standardised test results- Drumcondra Reading, Maths, Spelling and NNRIT
 - Screening tests of language skills

3. Inform the SEN Coordinator of your plan to open a Classroom Support Plan for a student

If needed, consult with an SEN team member to provide practical support when drafting, implementing and reviewing Classroom Support Plan.

Sample Classroom Support Plan and sample targets available *on the Teacher Share file* under Continuum of Support on the school's IMS (Aladdin) and also available in **Appendix 5**

5. Finalise the plan in collaboration with the pupil's parent/s. Tick relevant box on the Classroom Support plan to confirm parents have been consulted.
6. Upload Classroom Support plan on Aladdin. Student's Profile -under the heading 'Documents'.
7. Implement for an agreed period.
8. SET coordinator to open a Student Support File (if not opened already for the pupil) and update the Log of Actions on Aladdin. Hard copy of the file given to the SET coordinator and stored in the Student's Support file.
9. Review of the plan. Consider if the pupil may move to the next stage of the continuum, so, consult with the SEN coordinator.

Note:

In most classes it can be expected that a teacher will have some pupils on classroom support plans (CSPs). It is likely that there will be more CSPs in junior classes compared to senior classes.

A pupil should be moved directly to a School Support Plan (see Section 3.4 below) where is having severe difficulties.

A **Log of Actions** is completed for all pupils on the continuum. The Log of Actions gives overview, at a glance of all the learning support, intervention programmes, and reports from outside agencies a student has received. The log is updated regularly. It is filed in the individual Student Support file and a copy uploaded on the student's documents on the IS (Aladdin).

The template for Log of Actions is *on the Teacher Share file* under Continuum of Support on the school's IMS (Aladdin) and also available in **Appendix 5**.

A Support Plan is required when interventions at classroom support level are not enough fully meet a pupil's special educational needs. The class teacher involves the **SET Coordinator and/or S.E.T. member** in the problem-solving process at this point and it involves more systematic gathering of information and the development and monitoring of a School Support Plan. Parental permission will be needed for this referral. Interventions at this level will be additional to those provided through classroom support.

School Support Plans

For a pupil who has had a Support Plan from the previous year and this plan is continuing into the new school year. The draft plan is finalised between the class teacher and S.E.T. information from parents also. A meeting is arranged with the parents during the school year to share and discuss pupil progress in relation to the targets in the support plan. The process of arriving at and regularly reviewing a support plan is a collaborative process between all stakeholders.

- The School Support begins immediately in September based on the existing Support Plan.
- The review and update of the existing Support Plan gets underway as the same time. In support of this review process time is provided for a pupil's new class teacher and the special education teacher (SET) to become acquainted with the child as they begin to assess her current needs and, in turn, prepare a revised support plan for the year ahead.
- The draft plan is subsequently finalised at a meeting between the child's parents and relevant school staff members. Follow-up meetings are arranged as necessary during the school year to share and discuss pupil progress in relation to the targets in the support plan.

For a pupil who previously did not have a School Support Plan...

- Parental permission will be needed for this referral.
- Gather relevant data
- Draft and begin to implement the School Support Plan as soon as possible.

Steps to be taken by the SET and class teacher when drafting, implementing and reviewing a School Support Plan:

1. Identify the issue e.g. literacy
2. Gather evidence of the pupil's baseline performance – strengths and concerns. Depending on the issue, one or more of the following evidence gathering methods will be used.
 - Teacher observation records
 - Teacher-designed measures/assessments
 - Parent and pupil interviews
 - Learning environment checklist
 - Standardised test results- Drumcondra Reading, Maths, Spelling and NNRIT
 - Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy
 - Functional assessments as appropriate, including screening measure for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties

3. S.E.T. to Open a Student Support File (if not opened already for the pupil) and update Log of Actions on Aladdin.
4. Draft the School Support Plan using the template in the Student Support File. Include priority learning needs, a small number of targets and a limited number of carefully chosen actions that will serve progression towards the targets. Identify suitable teaching approaches including team-teaching, small group or individual support.

School Support Plan-sample plan available in the Teachers' Folder on the IMS under the 'COS' and in **Appendix 6**.

5. Finalise the School Support Plan in consultation with the class teacher and pupil's parent/s to sign a copy of the School Support Plan and/or S.E.T to confirm in writing that parent/s have been consulted on the plan.
6. S.E.T to provide the class teacher with a copy or access to the School Support Plan. Parent/s to be offered a copy of the plan also.
7. Implement for an agreed period.
8. Provide for regular informal consultation between the class teacher and SET, and parent as deemed necessary
9. Review the plan in a collaborative manner with a focus on the extent to which the targets have been achieved by the pupil. Include attendance of the child as this is an important factor influencing the extent to which progress towards the target/s is being achieved.
Review in February using the Review template in the Student Support File.
Review and Term 2 School Support Plan-sample plan available in the Teachers' Folder on the IMS under the file 'COS' and in **Appendix 7**.

End-of-Year review in June.

3.6 School Support Plus - Level 3

School support plus applies to those pupils whose needs are enduring and/or severe and complex and whose progress is considered inadequate despite carefully planned and reviewed interventions detailed in Classroom Support and/ or School Support plans.

If a pupil's special educational needs are severe and/or persistent, they are likely to need intensive support. This support may take the form of small group work or individual teaching. School Support Plus will generally involve personnel outside the school team in the problem-solving, assessment and intervention process. However, the information from Classroom Support and School Support work will provide the starting point for problem-solving at this level.

Steps to be taken by the SET and class teacher when drafting, implementing and reviewing a School Support Plus Plan:

- The School Support Plus process will be initiated if, in reviewing the School Support Plus Plan, it is agreed that the pupil is not making adequate learning progress.
- School Support Plus is informed by a detailed, systematic approach to information gathering and assessment using a broad range of formal and informal assessment tools.
- For the steps to be followed when drafting a School Support Plus Plan see *Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support, p32-34 (NEPS, 2007)*.
- **School Support Plus Plan**-sample plan available in the Teachers' Folder on the II under the file 'COS' and in **Appendix 8**.

3.7 Student Support File: Recording and Tracking School Support Plan

- A **Student Support File** is opened for every pupil who enters any level of the Continuum of Support while enrolled in the school. This file is a tool to record and track a pupil's pathway through the Continuum of Support.
- The Student Support File facilitates teachers in documenting progress and needs over time and assists them in providing an appropriate level of support to pupils in line with their level of need.
- Following a period of intervention and review of progress, a decision is made as to the appropriate level of support required by the pupil. This may result in a decision to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or move to a higher or lower level of support.
- As special educational needs can vary from mild to transient to significant and enduring, educational planning reflects the level of need of the individual pupil. In regard, the Student Support File facilitates a graduated response across the different levels of the Continuum: Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus.

4.0 Supporting the Continuum of Support

The Special Needs Team:

Teachers working in Special Education in Réalt na Mara will combine the role of Resource Teacher, Learning Support Teacher and Language Support teacher.

The Principal, Learning Support teacher, Resource teacher and Language Support teacher will work as a Special Needs team, collaborating, consulting and planning workloads and timetables to best implement this school policy to support children with special education needs within our school. The teachers will meet on a regular basis or as needs arise to discuss programmes of work, resources, COS plans and any recent information obtained from outside agencies which relates to pupils with special needs.

The principal teacher has overall responsibility for the education of children with special educational needs. Under the new allocation model the principal's leadership role is central and includes the following:

- Developing inclusive whole-school policies and monitoring their implementation
- Assigning staff strategically to teaching roles, including special education roles.
- Co-ordinating teachers' work to ensure continuity of provision for all pupils.
- Ensuring that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, pupils and external professionals/agencies.
- Ensuring that effective systems are implemented to identify pupils' needs and the progress is monitored methodically.
- Facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to education of pupils with special educational needs, and ensure that all school staff (class teachers, special education teachers and special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area.

While some of the duties listed above are delegated to a member of staff (Special Needs Coordinator) the principal retains overall responsibility for the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs.

4.2 Special Educational Needs Coordinator's Role for Mainstream pupils

In consultation with the Principal, the SEN Coordinator will

- Be responsible for the implementation and review of school policies on SEN.
- Manage a tracking system at whole-school level to identify and monitor SEN provision for each of the three levels of the Continuum.
- Coordinate the implementation of whole school procedures for the selection of pupils for School Support and School Support Plus.
- Assist or arrange assistance from the SEN team for class teachers when drafting, implementing and reviewing a Classroom Support Plan.
- Oversee the regular updating and recording keeping of Student Support Files assigned to SET and the class teacher.
- Coordinate the case-loads and timetables of SETs.
- To coordinate the administration of the NNRIT (New Non-Reading Intelligence Test) in first and fourth classes in the autumn of the school year.
- Coordinate review meetings at the agreed times throughout the school year.
- Coordinate in-class station teaching programmes e.g. Lift-Off to Literacy, Mata s Rang, Literacy Hour.
- Inform parents of in-class station teaching programmes commencing in their child's class.
- Coordinate in conjunction with SET members and class teachers a list of students who would benefit from accessing the following programmes: Toe by Toe (reading/spelling), SMART Moves (to develop fine/gross motor skills and social emotional skills), TTRS-Touch Type Read Spell programme.
- The SEN coordinator's *At-A-Glance Sheet* is completed for all pupils in every class on the continuum. The sheet is updated regularly. It is filed on the IMS (Aladdin) the Learning Support folder. Sample copy in **Appendix 9**.

Sensory breaks.

- Meet with parents on procedures for availing of special needs services as the need arises.
- Liaise with parents of children with special educational needs and with external agencies e.g. NEPS psychologists, therapists, etc.
- Assist the principal with students applying for an 'Irish Exemption'. Sample letter and application form in **Appendix 10**.
- Coordinate applications to the NCSE / SENO i.e. Assistive Technology.
- Maintain effective links with feeder second level schools and, where appropriate, arrange meetings, hand-overs and follow-up to facilitate the transition of pupils with special educational needs.
- Identify, share and promote professional development opportunities relating to special educational teaching with SETs and class-teachers.
- Update regularly the whole staff on SEN related matters.
- Keep informed of current best practice for special educational needs.

4.3 Role of the Class Teacher

Effective teaching and learning is critically important for all pupils, and especially for those with special educational needs. Meaningful inclusion implies that all pupils are taught in stimulating and supportive classroom environments where they are respected and valued. Mainstream class teachers have first-line responsibility for the education of all pupils in their classes. Accordingly, classroom teachers plan their lessons carefully to address the diverse needs within the classroom. They adapt their teaching approaches as the need arises for some pupils whose individual progress, application, motivation, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers are causes for concern. This may require targeted interventions to develop relevant adaptive skills related to these needs. All mainstream class teachers implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of pupils with special educational needs.

These include:

- Co-operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms
- Collaborative problem-solving activities
- Mixed ability and ability group work
- Differentiation
- Interventions to promote social and emotional competence
- Embedding digital technology in teaching, learning and assessment

Every pupil needs to be taught a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate to his/her developmental level. Pupils' levels of interest, attention, concentration and persistence are gradually developed, extended and rewarded, using appropriate teaching strategies. To cater for the range of learning needs in any class, mainstream class teachers regularly differentiate lessons by:

- Varying the level, structure and pace of lessons
- Adapting lessons to take account of pupils' interest
- Matching tasks to pupils' abilities and needs

The Class teacher will also collaborate with the SEN teacher

- To contribute to the development of learning targets and their implementation by collaborating with the SEN teacher in the development of COS plans.
- To implement appropriate activities to help attain these targets.
- Efforts are made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curricular area at the same time they attend Learning Support.
- To discuss and review with the Learning Support teacher the results of standardised screening and diagnostic assessments and to decide the type of intervention needed that best meet the needs of pupils.
- To make initial contact with parents to discuss concerns about their child's progress and to seek the approval of the parents to proceed with further assessment. To communicate on an ongoing basis with parents on the child's progress.
- To be aware of, to be kept updated and to consult with relevant professionals about the special needs of children with mild or specific learning difficulties within the class.
- The SEN teacher coordinates with the class teachers in the implementation of the staged approach to special education needs. (DES circular Special Ed. 24/03)
- To attend and provide reports on children for various meetings such as Meetings for other outside agencies.
- Class teachers to recognise the More Able/Talented Children. More able/talented children are identified as those who score at or above the 95th percentile on standardised tests. The class teacher will implement a differentiated programme. resources include areas such as mathematical reasoning, comprehension, puzzles, games and ICT.

4.4 The Role of the Special Education Needs Teacher

The role of the SEN teacher in relation to:

Pupils

- To identify pupils with learning/language/social & emotional needs by means of standardised, screening and diagnostic tests and from the recommendation of class teachers.
- To administer and score screening and diagnostic tests.
- To develop and plan a programme of work (COS) to support the pupils identified as having additional needs.
- To implement the programme of intervention and to continually evaluate its effectiveness.
- To maintain appropriate records of pupils taught and programmes implemented.

interventions required.

- To ensure that the class teacher is informed of the progress of SEN pupils.
- To advise on how teachers may differentiate lessons to support SEN pupils.
- To collaborate with the class teacher in devising strategies by which SNA's may support the SEN pupil.

Parents

- To inform parents of learning targets and the progress of their child.
- To advise parents on how they may support their child's learning at home.
- To meet with parents of each pupil selected for diagnostic assessment and to discuss outcomes.
- Decide targets for each pupil's School Support plans with parents, including the actions to be taken to meet those targets at home and in school.
- Communicate on an ongoing basis with parents with positive affirmation of progress early identification of difficulties.
- Advise and consult with parents when supplementary teaching is discontinued and identify ways pupil can be continually supported at home.
- Demonstrate teaching strategies to parents that will help with the child's learning.

Programmes

- To plan, coordinate and participate in literacy/numeracy/social & emotional intervention programmes (Lift Off to Literacy, Mata sa Rang, Junior Infant Early Intervention Strategy, Peer Reading, Toe by Toe, Power of Plus One /Two, Smart Moves, Literacy Hour, TTRS-Touch, Type Read Spell, etc).
- To provide in class support and team teaching when necessary.
- To attend courses and to keep informed of the latest thinking with regard to Special Education teaching.

4.5 Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Role

The purpose of the SNA scheme is to provide for the significant additional care need which some pupils with special educational needs may have. For a child to require or qualify for access to SNA support, a child must have an assessed disability. SNA support is provided in order to facilitate the pupils' attendance at school and to minimise disruption to class or teaching time for the pupils concerned, or for their peers, and with a view to developing their independent living skills. SNAs do not have a teaching/pedagogical role. The school implements the SNA scheme in accordance with the provisions of *DES Circular 0030/2014*. See SNA Policy for further details.

Parental contribution to children's learning programmes has a hugely positive influence on the overall progress and self-esteem of children with learning difficulties.

Parents can support the work of the school and learning support by:

- Providing learning activities at home in literacy and numeracy.
- Encouraging the use of ICT at home to support learning English and/or Maths.
- Reading stories to their child.
- Paired reading sessions.
- Implementing suggested home based activities outlined in the child's COS plans.
- Keeping school informed of progress observed in their child's learning.
- Attending meetings with learning support teachers and class teachers regarding School Support plans, progress and assessments.

4.7 The Role of Pupils

The involvement of pupils in developing, implementing and reviewing their own learning programme is important for them to become independent learners. Pupils attending learning support will learn to take responsibility for their own learning as appropriate:

- By becoming familiar with short-term targets that have been set for them.
- By applying learning strategies taught during support teaching to the classroom environment.
- By evaluating their own programme and by self-assessing their work.
- By becoming aware of their own strengths, weaknesses and needs.
- Demonstrate teaching strategies to parents that will help with the child's learning.

4.8 External Agencies' Role

Support and guidance is available to all teachers from external professionals such as NEP Psychologists, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), the NCSE Support Service, Inspectorate, and allied health professionals.

- The principal and/or SET coordinator/ SEN team /Class Teacher meet with the parents to discuss the need for the referral and to seek consent.
- The Class Teacher and SET complete the necessary form in consultation with appropriate school personnel e.g. previous class teacher. All referral forms must be photocopied and stored on the Student Support file.
- The external profession visits the school to meet, parents, principal, class teacher and the SEN teacher as appropriate and assessment is conducted.
- This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed.

When concern arises regarding the manner or speed of the follow-through post assessment such concern is pursued by the principal and/or SET coordinator/SET team with the out-of-school agency. The school will endeavour to incorporate relevant recommendations from health professionals in developing support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support.

To oversee implementation and review of the Learning Support policy and the provision of adequate resources, accommodation and storage.

5.0 Monitoring and recording outcomes for pupils with special educational needs

This stage of the process is informed by effective measurement of baseline performance, including the use of criterion-referenced tests and other methods of assessment (teacher-designed tests, checklists, samples of work, observation) that allow pupils to demonstrate their progress. A variety of assessment tools are employed. See Assessment Policy for full details. The list of *assessment tests for every class group* is available in *the Learning Support Shared Folder on the IMS (Aladdin)*. See [Appendix 11](#).

Results of every test is imputed on the *Pupil's Diagnostic Record Sheet*. See [Appendix 11](#). Monitoring outcomes is part of a *dynamic process* of identification, target-setting, intervention and review, which in turn *leads to adjustments* in support plans. The Student Support File provides the teachers with a useful resource to support and record this process. It includes a Support Review Record to guide teachers when monitoring progress and reviewing outcomes with parents and pupils. Monitoring of progress and subsequent adaptation of support plans are key drivers of effective practice.

Fortnightly Planning and Progress Records

Each week's work is planned in advance. Every attempt is made to support the class work through parallel planning. Regular contact with class teachers is essential for this to succeed. A sample template for weekly plan is available in the Learning Support Shared Folder on the IMS (Aladdin).

A full record of psychological reports, other reports and records of meetings and all assessments are kept in the individual Student Support file. Due to their confidential nature all reports e.g. psychological, medical, occupational/speech therapy for children attending Learning Support are kept in a locked centralised area. A copy of a report may be issued to the teacher on the S.E.T. team who is working with the pupil in question. However copies of reports are not given to class teachers. Class teachers may borrow a report to gain information regarding a pupil in their class but must return it thereafter to the centralised area.

All information is managed in accordance with the directives of both the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.

6.1 Rationale

The Department of Education acknowledges the very significant progress made by schools in developing inclusive practices and provision whereby the vast majority of pupils with special educational needs now attend mainstream schools. It also recognises that a small minority of pupils with significant and enduring needs may require a more specialist setting (for example a special class or special school placement). This 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. The Education for Persons with Disabilities Act 2004 states that *'A child is entitled to attend the school which is most suited to his or her overall needs'*. No child will be refused admission solely on the grounds that she has SEN except where the provision required is incompatible with that available in our school.

6.2 Enrolment Procedure for pupils with SEN in Mainstream Classes

- The BOM, through the Principal, has the right to request a copy of the child's medical/psychological report or where such a report is not available to request that the child be assessed immediately.
- The purpose of this assessment report is to assist the school in establishing the needs of the child and to profile the support services required.
- Following receipt of the report the Principal will assess how the school could meet the needs specified in the report.
- Where the Principal advises the BOM that further resources are required, it will, prior to enrolment request the Department of Education and Science (DES) or National Council for Special Education (NCSE see Circular 01/05)) to provide the resources required to meet the needs of the child as outlined in the psychological or medical report. These resources may include, for example, access to or the provision of the following: visiting teacher service, SNA, specialised equipment or furniture, transport services or other. It will be necessary for the BOM to identify health and safety issues arising from the enrolment of a special needs child, for example, access, toilets, supervision and administering of medicine.
- The school will meet with the parents or, if necessary, a full-case conference involving all parties will be held.
- It may be necessary for the BOM to decide to defer enrolment of a particular child pending the provision of appropriate resources (EPSEN 2004).
- SEN children will be fully integrated unless it is inconsistent with the best interests of the child with effective educational provision for other children.(EPSEN2004)
- The Education Act 1998 states that the BOM must ensure that the educational needs of all students must be identified and provided for
- Under the Disability Bill 2004 schools must ensure to promote equality and social inclusion for all. It is important to promote and foster in school communities an environment that encourages pupils to attend school and to participate fully in school life. (Education Welfare Act 2000)

Classes.

6.4 Inclusion Policy for pupils with SEN in the ASD and Mainstream Classes

- See School's Policy on the Integration and Inclusion of Pupils With Autistic Spectrum Disorders Into Mainstream Classes.

7.0 Exemptions from the study of Irish

7.1 Prescribed procedures

The School Management is required to observe the prescribed protocols and procedures in relation to granting pupils exemptions from the study of Irish. These protocols and procedures are set out in *DES Circular 0054/2022* which is available in [Appendix 1](#).

8.0 Transitions

8.1 Transition practices

Good planning for transition helps to ensure the successful transfer of pupils from primary school to post-primary school and between special and mainstream settings. Effective transition support and planning enhances the educational experience of the child and help reduce potential anxiety, particularly for pupils with SEN. Links are already established with 'transition' schools in the area for our pupils. Meetings are arranged where needed with transition schools to help ease the anxiety levels for the children in our school. Meetings with parents/guardians are also arranged with NEPS Educational Psychologist, as required e.g. for students with ASD. The principal/ NEPS/SEN Coordinator/SET team/class teacher are responsible for the orderly transition of pupils with SEN to other schools. SEN children, may require a special placement or additional support e.g. SNA in secondary school, need to be identified in term one of 5th Class. The transition process needs to be initiated by all stakeholders at this stage.

To support the reporting and transfer of pupil information from primary to post-primary school, our school utilises the Education Passport.

9.0 School Refusal

9.1 Prescribed procedures

Information for schools, students and parents/guardians and carers is available in the [Meath Emotionally Based School Avoidance Resource Pack](#) and in [Appendix 14](#).

School Refusal-School & Parental Checklist available in [Appendix 15](#).

School Refusal-Sample Return to School Plan available in [Appendix 16](#).

9.0 Ratification

The policy was reviewed by the SEN team and principal over an extended time period in 2023. The policy review was conducted in consultation with the staff.

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management in May 2023.

Ratification

Signed: John Corbett

John Corbett Chairperson Board of Management

Date: 9/5/2023

Appendices

Appendices are only available in the hardcopy of the policy statement in the school office and SET Resource Room.

