

St Joseph's Secondary School

Special Educational Needs Policy

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1.1 Rationale

This policy document aims to outline the form that additional educational support for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) takes in the school and the philosophy that underpins it. It is written in the context of the Education Act 1998, and takes account of the *Education for Person's with Disabilities Act (EPSEN)* published in 2004. This policy should be viewed as a working document and be reviewed on a bi-annual basis. This policy bases its rationale on the principles laid out in the EPSEN Act which state that:

"The education of people with SEN shall take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs",

"People with SEN shall have the same right to avail of and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers", and

"That people with SEN leave school with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives."

(EPSEN Act 2004)

2. Special Education Need's Team and Categories

2.1 Categories of Special Education Needs (SEN)

To date, the school has provided for the following categories of students with Special Educational Needs:

- Borderline/ Mild General Learning Disability
- Emotional / Behavioural Difficulties—ADD/ADHD
- Specific Learning Difficulty—Dyslexia
- Physical disabilities—Dyspraxia
- Mild Speech and Language Disorders
- Sensory Difficulties (hearing & visual impairments)
- ESOL students (English for students of other languages)
- Autism / Autistic Spectrum Disorder (e.g.. Aspergers Syndrome)

In addition to these categories we understand that under **circular 08/02 (Appendix 1)** the following categories of SEN exist also:

- Moderate General Learning Disability
- Severe / Profound General Learning Disability

- Down's Syndrome

2.2 Learning support

Learning support is provided to students without a diagnosed learning difficulty from the General Allocation Model (GAM) of allocated resource hours. Students are identified and tracked through the School house examinations and by teacher referral.

2.3 English as an additional language (EAL)

For newcomer students where English is not their first language, English support is provided from the GAM. Students are withdrawn for this support in a one to one or small group basis as appropriate.

2.4 Students of exceptional ability

CPD has been provided to staff to support teaching students of exceptional ability. The SEN department and NEPS are also available to support staff in differentiating work for students in this category. At each Year meeting in term one, teachers are advised of students who have shown exceptional ability in CAT assessments to help them evaluate and plan for these students in their teaching.

2.5 Roles within Resource/Learning Support Department

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)

The Role of the Resource teacher/SENCO is to provide support for children with special educational needs as listed above. The Resource teacher/SENCO has responsibility for assessing and recording students' needs and progress. He/she plans resource provision in each year, and revises this provision on a regular basis. All students in the school who present with an educational need are supported to the extent that resources allow. SNA provision is timetabled by the SENCO and this provision is reviewed and adjusted on a regular basis. The SENCO also has a responsibility for meeting and advising parents and meeting with relevant professionals.

Resource/Learning Support Teacher

The role of the Learning Support teacher is to support and remediate the literacy and numeracy needs of students. The Learning Support teacher has responsibility for setting learning targets for each student he/she supports. He/she also is responsible for maintaining schemes of work for each term and for monitoring and evaluating students' progress.

2.6 Role of partners in the SEN team

Parents

Parents, through their unique knowledge of their own child have much to contribute to their child's learning programme. Parents are encouraged to actively communicate with the school if they observe any learning or related difficulties in their child at home. In all cases where screening, assessment and profiling is being conducted parents are consulted and their permission sought. The SEN department advocates a partnership of collaboration and co-operation with parents of students with SEN.

Students

The involvement of pupils in the development, implementation and review of their own learning programmes is an important principle that underpins effective SEN provision. Students are encouraged to contribute to their own learning targets and to develop ownership of these targets.

Classroom teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class. It is particularly important that all class teachers create a classroom environment that accommodates and takes account of the learning needs of all their students. He/she is expected to differentiate the content, activities and teaching methodologies to take account of the range of abilities and needs of the students they teach.

The class teacher also plays an important role in the early identification of pupils with SEN. The class teacher is alert to the possibility of general and specific learning difficulties and brings their concerns to the attention of the SEN department. A key element of successful SEN provision is a high level of consultation and co-operation between the class teacher and the SEN department.

Guidance Counsellors

The Guidance Counsellor's role within the SEN team consists largely of the following functions:

- Counselling in personal, educational and career development
- Guidance in relation to DARE applications
- Career information
- Consultation with parents and staff
- Consultation with community organisations
- Vocational preparation – job search skills, preparation for work experience

Chaplain

The School Chaplain has a specific mission toward the spiritual care and faith development of the entire school population and the promotion of apostolic activities within the school.

Principal/Board of Management (BOM)

The Principal/Board of Management has an important role in developing, supporting and monitoring school policy on Special Education Needs provision. The Principal/BOM oversee the development, implementation and review of school policy on SEN, promote the professional training and development of staff in SEN, ensure adequate teaching resources are available and provide a secure facility for the storage of records in respect of SEN students.

2.7 Special Needs Assistant

The role of the Special Needs Assistant is outlined in Appendix 2 (Role of the SNA). All SNAs are given a written copy of this document.

3. Model of Organisation

3.1 Whole school context

St. Joseph's Secondary School organises its classes in a mixed ability setting. Base classes are a mixed ability unit from first to third year. The school does however bear in mind that some subjects do not lend themselves to being taught as mixed ability and may have different requirements depending on the syllabus being taught. This can result in some classes within a small number of subject areas being banded.

3.2 Identification of SEN

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

3.2.1 School based identification

A class teacher, tutor and/or Year Head can refer any student they are concerned about to the SEN department. Any referral made by a class teacher or tutor must be forwarded to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) who will begin a broader profile.

This first step in the screening process allows the SEN team, in co-operation with Guidance Counsellors, Chaplain, Year Heads and Principal to identify the nature of SEN being experienced. It is during this time that the learning, emotional, behavioural and social needs of the student are evaluated.

3.2.2 Parent Referral Process

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

3.3 Preliminary Screening/Student profiling

If it is deemed appropriate the SENCO initiates a process of formal and informal assessment to be conducted by the SEN department.

Informal Assessment:

- Observations from mainstream teachers.
- Consultation with parents.
- Student Journal.
- Meeting with pupil.

Formal Assessment:

- Review of entrance tests.
- Review of in house exams and reports.
- Behavioural record if appropriate.
- Consultation with Guidance Counsellors.
- Review of previous professional assessments
- Initiate preliminary assessment by NEPS psychologist

Following this screening/profiling stage decisions are made as to appropriate support warranted.

- No need for further action.
- Needs for monitoring/support in mainstream setting.
- Purposeful Withdrawal.
- SNA support

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

3.4 Model of SEN provision

In assessing and deciding the level of SEN support the following options are considered:

- Team Teaching
- SNA support in specific classes
- Small group withdrawal
- Individual withdrawal
- Curricular reduction

The period of intervention recommended to each student is dependent on the nature and extent of their individual need. The duration of provision is reviewed at regular intervals. There are cases where support is needed on a short-term basis, after which the student is in a position to recommence with the regular curriculum. All decisions in this regard are made in consultation with senior management, parents/guardians, class teachers, resource teacher and student.

3.5 Programme Planning

The objectives of the assessments conducted by the SEN department are to identify the pupil's learning, behavioural, emotional and social needs. As a result of the information generated by this assessment process it may be necessary to have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or an Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP) created in consultation with NEPS psychologist, Principal, class teachers, resource teachers, parents and pupil to best enable the student to progress in school.

3.5.1 Personal Pupil Profile (PPP)

All students with diagnosed SEN have a PPP.

PPPs include:

- Priority learning needs
- Relevant information about student's SEN
- Appropriate teaching approaches
- Short/medium term Learning goals
- Curricular needs

The SEN partners including the Principal, NEPS psychologist, Year head, Guidance department, resource teacher, class teachers, SNA, parents and the pupil himself have input into these profiles. Staff have access to profiles on the school VShare.

3.5.2 Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP)

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

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

1. The purpose of any behaviour plan should be to help the pupil to take responsibility for his own behaviour and to teach him how to make appropriate choices.
 2. A multi-disciplinary approach is recommended, one that includes the teacher(s), Special Needs Assistant, principal, parent(s) and the pupil in the process. It will be more difficult to succeed with an Individual Behaviour Plan if the parent or pupil are not willing participants.
 3. As part of the Behaviour Plan, a Behaviour Contract may need to be drawn up which is signed by all parties. In drawing up this contract, it is important to use language which is clear and appropriate to the age and ability of the pupil.
- There are a number of steps to an Individual Behaviour Plan. These are generally the steps that one might take:

- Identify Problem Behaviours:
- Observe and Record Behaviour:
- Analyse Data Gathered:

- Implement Intervention Strategy:
- Evaluate the Intervention:

3.6 Review/Evaluation

The progress of each pupil with SEN should be monitored on an ongoing basis throughout the term. At the end of each half term the resource teacher/SEN Co-ordinator, in consultation with the SEN partners evaluates the merits, progress and weaknesses of the programme. These evaluations help to form the basis of future planning. The primary purpose of this review is to determine whether or not the agreed learning targets have been achieved and to decide the nature and level of resource support, if any, that should be provided in the following term.

3.7 Timetabling of Resource Provision

Individual Withdrawals

The SEN department may withdraw students from other subject areas in consultation with the respective subject department and with parental permission. In some cases students with SEN may be on reduced timetables to facilitate their Special Education Needs. These students may attend resource during the freed times on their timetable. If appropriate this support will be on a one to one basis.

Small Group support

When SEN students have similar needs small group support is provided to maximize the benefit of the resource hours allocated to the school. Currently small group support is provided in maths and literacy. Provision is reviewed on an annual basis.

Team Teaching

Team teaching is encouraged and seen as a preferred model of resource provision as it allows inclusion of SEN students in mainstream classes. Currently team teaching operates in maths classes.

Senior Cycle

The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) is recommended for students whose learning needs would not be met by the demands of the traditional Leaving Certificate. In instances where an SEN student chooses LCA it is generally accepted that the curriculum itself supports the student and thus specific SEN

provision is unnecessary. However where it is apparent that additional support is necessary for an SEN student, this will be reviewed on an individual basis.

4. Communication

4.1 SEN Pupil Register

The details of all students with SEN including their PPP are kept on school VShare. A hard copy of the student SEN register is kept in the staffroom.

4.2 SEN briefing of staff

The SENCO briefs staff at Year meetings regarding the profile of students with SEN in the year.

4.3 Record Keeping

- A record is kept of all meetings of the SEN department.
- The SEN department maintains an up to date record of all student referrals.
- A student profile is kept on every student with SEN. This profile is updated following review of SEN provision. All professional reports are kept on school VShare.

4.4 Induction of new staff

New staff are advised of students with SEN in the school and how to access information in relation to each student.

5. Enrolment Process

5.1 Enrolment policy

(Please see Appendix 5 for Enrolment Policy)

5.1 Transition from primary to secondary school

St. Joseph's Secondary School seeks to foster a climate of support for incoming students that is flexible and allows for creative responses to individual needs

5.1.1 Sharing of relevant information

In making provision for students with SEN, with parental permission, important information relating to each student is obtained from feeder primary schools.

A student profile is then prepared for incoming students with SEN and appropriate supports are planned.

5.1.2 Steps in moving to St. Joseph's Secondary School

The following steps are followed to help the transition from Primary to Secondary School:

- SEN team meet with parents At Open Day and again at incoming 1st Year parents' evening. Where specific concerns regarding SEN students are in evidence, phone contact is made by resource department with parents and needs/resources available discussed.
- SEN department reviews results of CAT assessments. Class groups are formed in consultation with the Principal. Resource provision for incoming SEN students is discussed with Principal. .

5.2 Assessment procedure

The CAT assessments are the basis on which class groups are formed. The purpose of these assessments is to identify learning needs that have not yet come to light, to ensure a true mixed ability class setting and to facilitate option choice where appropriate.

Further testing may be done to find out more data regarding the student's SEN to enable the resource department to put in place appropriate supports.

As policy we do not disclose entrance test results to parents. However, where a concern arises, parents are contacted and student's individual needs are discussed. All screening occurs with parents' permission.

5.3 Ongoing monitoring of progress and support of transfer to second level

The progress of each student is monitored on an on-going basis throughout the term. At the end of each half term a review is conducted to observe, record and evaluate progress made.

6. Liaison with other professional agencies

It is often the role of the Resource / Learning Support teacher to attend meetings with and liaise closely with a number of out-of-school agencies such as those listed below.

6.1 National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

The National Council for Special Education has been established as an independent statutory body. The council has authority to:

- Carry out research and provide expert advice to the Minister for Education and Science on the educational needs of children with disabilities and the provision of related services.

- Provide for a range of services at local and national level in order that the educational needs of children with disabilities are identified and provided for, and
- Co-ordinate, with health authorities, schools and other relevant bodies, the provision of education and related support services to children with disabilities.

6.2 Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO)

The SENO represents the local delivery aspect of the work of the NCSE. There are approximately 70 SENO's employed nationally and all have a qualification and work experience relating to service delivery to children with SEN. SENO's have responsibility for:

- Co-ordinating and facilitating the delivery of educational services to children with SEN.
- Processing applications for resources for children with SEN.
- Regular and detailed engagement with organisations such as health authorities, the DES, the Inspectorate and National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

6.3 National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

St. Joseph's Secondary School is provided with a senior psychologist from NEPS. The service that is delivered by NEPS operates under the following framework:

- Consultation about individual students
- Recommendations and advice on individual students needs
- Advice on classroom strategies and resources
- Advisory work in relation to SEN policy and practice
- Consultation and recommendations in relation to R.A.C.E. (Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations)
- Full psychological assessments as needed.

Student's cases are presented to the NEPS psychologist and each case prioritised for assessment on its merits by the psychologist in consultation with the SENCO and school Principal.

6.4 Health Service Executive

A number of students are under the supervision of the social services section of the HSE. Case conferences are held periodically to plan and decide

measures to be put in place to support these students. All key partners in the student's welfare attend these conferences.

Appendices

1. *DES circular 08/02*
2. *The Role of the SNA in St Joseph's Secondary School*