

St. Joseph's **Secondary School**

Special Needs Policy

Introduction

St. Joseph's recognises that it is the right of every student to be educated to their fullest potential by having access to the whole school curriculum, regardless of their special educational needs.

Students who have been identified as having special educational needs, which includes physical disabilities, emotional and behavioural difficulties, social difficulties and learning difficulties are entitled to special educational provision in order for them to make appropriate progress and to receive a rich and varied educational experience within the mainstream setting. This is the responsibility of all staff in the school. The Board of Management fully support this practice in our school.

Admission Agreement

Admission arrangements are outlined in the school prospectus. Admission for children with Special Education Needs is as for all children.

Definition of Special Educational Needs:

Pupils have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty, which call for special educational provision to be made for them.

Pupils have a learning difficulty if they:

- Have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age
- Have a disability, which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age
- Pupils will not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of their home is different from the language in which they are taught.

Special Educational Provision may be triggered when pupils fail to achieve adequate progress, despite having had access to a mainstream programme.

Parents and staff will be informed that the child has special educational needs and appropriate provision identified to meet the child's needs will be made.

Lack of adequate progress may be indicated by:

- Little or no progress despite the use of targeted teaching approaches
- Working at levels significantly below age expectations, particularly in literacy or numeracy
- Presenting persistent emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, which have not been managed by behavioural strategies usually employed
- Sensory or physical problems that result in little progress despite the provision of appropriate aids or equipment
- Poor communication or interaction, requiring specific interactions to access learning
- Having medical needs which mean that a pupil is unable to access education in school.

Special Educational Needs Provision is achieved by:

- Identifying and assessing individual pupil's needs
- Reporting of pupils' needs to members of staff
- Providing an appropriate curriculum, taking in account National Curriculum and examination syllabuses
- Delivering an appropriate curriculum, taking into account
 - suitable teaching material
 - effective, differentiated teaching strategies
 - a supportive learning environment
 - encouraging a positive self image.
- Providing learning support through
 - curriculum development
 - support teaching
 - team teaching
- Using outside agencies where necessary
- Monitoring individual progress and making revisions where necessary
- Ensuring that parent/carers understand the process and involving them in the support of their child's learning.
- Encouraging pupils with special educational needs to actively participate in all decision making processes and contributing to the assessment of their needs, the reviews and transition process.
- Making regular reports to the Principal regarding special educational needs issues to raise awareness and to aid implementation of processes and procedures.
- Submitting a Reasonable Accommodation Application for students intending to sit State Examinations.

Structural Arrangements

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of school personnel with regard to special educational needs are give below.

Board of Management

- Working in partnership with the Principal. The Board of Management have responsibility for deciding the school's general policy and approach to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs.
- Ensuring, through the performance management process, that the Principal sets objectives and priorities in the school development plan which include special educational needs.
- Monitoring the special educational needs policy through the school's self review procedure.
- All Board members are informed of the school's special educational needs provision, including funding equipment and staffing.
- Reporting to parents on the school's special educational needs policy.
- Aware of forthcoming disability legislation.

The Principal

- Setting objectives and priorities in the school development plan which include special educational needs.
- Managing day-to-day provision for pupils with special educational needs, including setting a budget for special educational needs with in the school's overall financial resources.
- Informing the Board of Management of developments in special educational needs field.

Head of Learning Support and Special Educational Needs Coordinator:

- Disseminating information and raising awareness of special educational needs issues throughout the school.
- Is responsible to the Principal through the delegated responsibility of the Deputy Principal for the management of special educational needs provision and the day-to-day operation of the special educational needs policy.
- Managing and developing the roles of Special Needs Assistants.
- Screening and identifying pupils with special educational needs.
- Coordinating provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Supporting teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs.
- Keeping accurate records of all pupils with special educational needs.
- Drawing up, reviewing and monitoring individual education plans.
- Being responsible and accountable for the whole-school special needs resources and sharing with the Principal responsibility for the allocation of funding devolved directly from the Department of Education and Science.
- Liaising with parents of pupils with special educational needs.

- Liaising with and advising fellow teachers and support staff.
- Liaising with schools including feeder schools.
- Liaising with outside agencies.
- Contributing to in-service training.
- Communicating special educational needs issues to and from the Department.
- Raising awareness of special educational needs issues at departmental meetings.
- Keeping departmental documentation up to date.
- Attending Learning Support Reps meetings.

Subject Heads

- Interpreting the school's special educational needs policy as departmental practice, including writing their departmental special educational needs statement.
- Ensuring appropriate curriculum provision and delivery clearly stated in their scheme of work.
- Ensuring appropriate teaching resources for pupils with special educational needs are purchased.
- Raising awareness of department responsibilities towards special educational needs issues..

Teaching Staff (including Heads of Year and Form Tutors)

“All teachers are teachers of Special Needs”

- Devising strategies and identifying appropriate differentiated methods of access to the curriculum.
- Recognising that central to the work of every teacher is the cycle of planning, teaching, assessing and evaluating that takes account of the wide range of abilities, aptitudes and interests of the pupils in their classes.
- Ensuring classroom support plans are used in the planning of their lessons.
- Monitoring progress of pupils with special educational needs.
- Completion of relevant special educational needs proformas/documentation by required deadlines.
- Ensure that work is available to pupils who are absent due to illness/injury.
- Being fully aware of the school's procedure of special educational needs.
- Raising individual concerns to the Head of Learning Support.
- Are responsible to Subject Leaders and/or Year Heads.

Special Needs Assistants

- Supporting pupils with special educational needs.
- Monitoring progress.
- Assisting with drawing up individual education plans/classroom support plans for the pupils they are responsible for.
- Contributing to the review progress.

- Working with small groups in or out of the classroom, under the direction of the class teacher.

Inclusion

In St. Joseph's all pupils irrespective of ability, race or need are respected and valued as complete individuals. This is reflected in the school's organisational and curriculum structure, its assessment and rewards systems, the arrangements made for careers' education and work experience and in pupils' records of achievement. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated and included into the life of the school as a whole, including its social and cultural activities.

The school believes that:

- the needs, rights and entitlements of individual pupils are the focus of both an educational and social environment'
- staff are entitled to an effective and supportive environment, consistent quality training and effective learning environment and good quality advice
- The family and community should work together.

Pupils with Medical Needs who are absent from school:

Medical conditions may have a significant impact on the pupil's experiences and the way they function in school. The impact maybe in that the condition may affect cognitive or physical abilities, behaviour or emotional state. The effects may be intermittent and their impact on the pupil can vary at different stages in their school life. The school aims to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged because of ill health and that they have the opportunity to full demonstrate their abilities at public examination level.

Role of Learning Support Teacher/Resource Teacher

- Initially be responsible for collating relevant work and ensuring that it is sent to the pupil
- Maintain regular contact with parents and pupils ensuring that information about school and its events are passed on and that reintegration planes are made; including reduced timetables if appropriate and facilitates contact with peer groups.
- Liaise with relevant members of staff.
- Prepare and monitor plans for reintegration of required.

Identification of students with Special Educational Needs

Be proactive in the prompt identification of special educational needs via:

- referral from primary feeder schools

- teacher or parental observation
- results of entrance tests
- pupils self-referral

Provision of Needs

- Adopt a staged approach for identifying and meeting special educational needs, structured according to the needs of the individual pupil. Programmes of intervention will be monitored by the designated support teacher and reviewed termly.
- Create a small class, maximum of ten, who follow Junior Certificate Curriculum.
- Integrate pupils with special educational needs into mainstream classes for optional subjects.
- Provide enhanced staffing and additional teacher support for special educational needs targeting priority areas. This enhanced staffing may be used to attach support teachers to lessons or to reduce group size. Support staff will offer help and guidance to all pupils rather than the small numbers reached in the isolation of the “remedial class” or special unit. Support teachers may work with individuals or small groups within the classroom or, occasionally, outside the classroom if appropriate.
- Withdraw pupils of requested from mainstream class who have a special learning difficulty.
- Expect all teachers to be aware of the differing needs of the pupils in their classroom, and to be responsible for analysing the difficulty of the materials they use.
- Monitor performance in November first year testing.
- Assess pupils’ needs and progress where appropriate.
- Advise and liaise with parents.
- Liaise with partner second level schools.
- Liaise with other providers of special educations when necessary;
- Make full use of NEPS.
- Coordinate the production of Individual Education Programmes for pupils with statements of special educational needs.

Special Needs Record Keeping

All records for special needs students, including screening results, referral forms, student plans, report cards, screening and diagnostic test results and assessment reports are in locked files in the Resource Room. All reports should indicate programme and evaluation modifications. These records are confidential and should be made available only to parents, teachers and academic coordinators of special needs students.

Special Needs Information

All professional staff will be made aware of the service provided for special needs students and will be given copies of a statement of policy, identification guidelines, and a referral form.

The Role played by the Parents of Pupils

The school aims to welcome and encourage parents to participate in their child's education in St. Joseph's.

Working with Pupils

St. Joseph's will try to actively involve its pupils in the development of the IEP Targets and other teaching aims.

Children should be encouraged to share in the recording process and in monitoring and evaluating their own performance.

Teacher will need to be sensitive to their views and wishes and ensure that as they mature their opportunities to participate are fully exploited.

Pupils with special educational needs should become progressively more involved in setting and evaluating targets within the IEP process. Young people with special educational needs may have low self-esteem and lack confidence. Actively encouraging these pupils to track their own progress and record achievement within a programme of action designed to meet their particular learning or behavioural difficulty will contribute to improved confidence and self-image.

Some young people may wish for personal support and may prefer to express their view through a parent or other family member or an independent supporter such as an advocate.

Allocation of Resources

The school is funded to meet the needs of all their pupils through its core budget but is additionally funded to support provision for special educational needs.

Transfer Arrangements

All documentation about special educational needs included in a pupil's record is not transferred between schools. This hopefully will change.

The records of pupils who leave at the end of the year are kept and stored in the school. Records, examinations results, psychological assessments and student profiles are safely stored.

Complaints Procedure

Initially, all complaints from parents or carers about their child's special needs provision is made to the Head of Learning Support who follows this up with relevant staff. However, if a parent is not satisfied with the response given, the Complaints Procedure outlined in the forthcoming Disability Bill may be followed.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Special Needs Policy

The degree of success of the policy and its implementation will be evaluated using the following indicators:

- Recorded views of pupils and parents.
- Recorded views by teachers on pupil's competence, confidence and social acceptability.
- Measurable or observable gains from pupils, particularly in terms of set targets, screening tests and other assessments carried out where appropriate – Marino testing and Junior Certificate Results.
- Evidence of planning and targeted expenditure for special educational needs by departments.
- Learning Support Teachers review procedure in consultation with Subject Leaders, Year Heads and outside agencies.
- Feedback from all involved in special educational needs.
- The perception of pupils and their parents of the support they have received.

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