



## St. Caimin's Community School

# **Special Educational Needs Policy**

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## **Introduction**

The Board of Management, Parents and Staff of St Caimin's Community School are committed to the creation of an inclusive, supportive learning environment for all pupils. We acknowledge inclusive education to mean 'the process of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from the curricula, cultures and communities of local mainstream educational institutions' (Booth & Ainscow 1998)

The 2004 Act 'Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs' defines special education needs as '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..(Government of Ireland, 2004b, section 1)

Accordingly, this definition includes all those pupils for whom additional or alternative provisions, services or facilities have to be provided. It includes those with Special Educational Needs as referred to in the Education Act 1998 "*those with a disability and those pupils who are exceptionally able*"

Priority will be given to students who have fallen three years or more behind their chronological age level in the areas of literacy or numeracy, as identified on standardised tests.

Support will also be given to those identified by a psychological report as having a specific learning difficulty but who, for resource allocation purposes, fall outside the definition used by the Department of Education and Skills.

Other categories of students with special education needs such as ethnic minority and minority language students, students of Traveller heritage, those experiencing educational disadvantage, exceptionally able students and students with physical disabilities will also be provided for within the resources available to the school.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to all of the community of St Caimin's Community School. Its interventions and supports apply particularly to the students of the school, as they progress through their second-level education in the school

### **Rationale**

This policy derives from the Mission Statement which states that each person can develop to the fullest while feeling cared for and safe. We aim to foster and develop an all-inclusive learning environment in which all pupils, no matter what their difficulty, are enabled to experience success and to achieve their full potential within our school community.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the Special Education Needs Policy are that all students are enabled to

- participate fully in the school community
- develop to their full potential
- acquire the basic personal skills, social skills, literacy skills and numeracy skills needed for life
- develop in a supportive environment in which they can enhance their individual talents
- experience success
- develop a positive self image and self esteem
- live a full life and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual through access to an appropriate broad and balanced curriculum
- function as independently as possible in society through the provision of such educational supports as are necessary to realise that potential and to continue learning in adult life.

### **Related Policies**

This policy document may be read in conjunction with the following

- Mission Statement
- Admissions and Participation policy
- Child Protection policy
- Policy on Countering Bullying Behaviour
- SPHE and RSE policy

- Critical Incident policy
- Code of Behaviour for Students
- Homework Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- Health & Safety Statement
- Dignity at Work Charter
- Internet Acceptable Usage Policy
- Guidance and Pastoral Care Plan

### **Guidelines for Selection of Pupils**

The selection process involves systematic gathering of information beginning with consultation with parents and primary school personnel. The National Educational Psychological Service psychologists (NEPS), the Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) and other support professionals may also be consulted. *Parental consent is obtained prior to such consultations.*

### **Learning Support**

- Pupils in need of Learning Support are identified using standardised screening tests administered early in the first term. This testing is done in cooperation with the Guidance Counsellor.
- Subsequently diagnostic testing is carried out on a smaller group of potential learning support candidates. Priority candidates, already defined, are identified for intervention.
- Students may receive Learning Support if referred by the classroom teacher in the event of noticeable difficulties arising in the areas of literacy and numeracy
- Referrals for Learning Support are also made by parents at any time. The pupils referred are assessed and interventions may be put in place if it is deemed advantageous to do so.

### **Special Educational Needs**

An application will be made to the Department of Education and Skills for additional resources both human (resource teaching hours or special needs assistants) and physical (ramps, assistive technology etc) for students who have been appropriately assessed and who meet the relevant criteria for Special Educational Needs.

- If a student has not been identified as having a special educational need until after enrolment, the permission of parents will be sought to engage the involvement of the appropriate professionals, e.g., National Educational Psychological Service Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist.
- On foot of any recommendations of such professionals, application for resources will be made to the Special Education Needs Organiser of the National Council for Special Needs

### **Gifted Talented Students**

Students who score in the top five percentile of norm referenced ability tests, administered by the school, will be termed gifted for the purposes of this policy. The school will enhance the educational development of gifted students by fostering an ethos conducive to high achievement. Suitable students will be identified and their parents will be informed of the Centre for Talented Youth run by Dublin City University.

### **Implementation of Learning Support/Special Education Provision**

Individual Profiles and Learning Programmes ( IPLP ) are developed and reviewed for each student identified as in need of Learning and/or Special Education Need Support. The IPLP contains

- Student details
- Reasons for intervention
- Student strengths
- Key areas of intervention
- Aims of intervention

- Curriculum modification (where applicable, eg Irish Exemption)
- Timetable for intervention
- Resources and pedagogical styles to be used
- Personnel to be involved
- Defined review structure (annual review)

A more detailed monthly programme is devised by the teacher involved in the delivery of this intervention in consultation with the learning support teacher and class teachers.

The aid and expertise of other educational/medical support professionals may be sought when devising an IPLP for students identified as qualifying for resource teaching hours.

- Strategies will be planned in full consultation with the students and parents.
- Careful planning, curricular modifications, activity based teaching methodologies, the identification of appropriate learning outcomes, the adaptation of teaching materials and the use of assessment procedures which build on a pupils strengths are essential here. The assistance of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) where available and in-class teaching support staff will further facilitate this differentiated learning environment within the mainstream class.
- Where the need arises, certain accommodations such as hearing aids, braille machines, computers and/or other assistive technology may be sought from the National Council for Special Education
- A small number may require support from a special needs assistant.
- Where students need the assistance of a resource teacher in addition to the help they receive from their mainstream class teachers, efforts will be made to have this additional support facilitated within the mainstream class, although withdrawal may also be used as a method of intervention.
- Students in receipt of learning support or those identified as being in need of resource teaching are, where possible and appropriate, placed

in small class groups for core subjects to facilitate more specialised attention and appropriate pedagogical styles.

- Applications are made for accommodations in state examinations, eg a waiver of spelling and grammar in language subjects
- Inclusive practices are applied both within the classroom and within the broader school environment. Examples of this are accelerated reading schemes, peer mentoring and lunchtime activities.
- Sport and other extra- curricular activities are an important part of the social inclusion strategy of the school.
- Curricular modification and the introduction of skill specific programmes to meet the needs of students with SEN is facilitated.

### **Procedure for acquiring an Exemption from Irish**

- The guidelines set down by the Department of Education and Skills will be strictly adhered to. (Circular 10/94)
- The school will consider granting an exemption for Irish when a written request is made by the pupil's parents and the school is furnished with a copy of a psychological report not more than two years old or other supporting documentation.

### **Senior Pupils**

At senior level the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme offers an alternative to pupils for whom the conventional Leaving Certificate Programme is inappropriate. This is just one of the options open to these pupils who also have the opportunity to participate in Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme or the traditional Leaving Certificate Programme.

Additional literacy/ numeracy interventions may be provided to senior pupils resource permitting.

Study skills programmes are offered to all senior pupils experiencing difficulties with study, motivation or time management.

**Access**

Reasonable effort is made on the part of the school management in conjunction with the facilities management company to ensure the building provides access to pupils with physical disabilities. In cooperation with the guidance counsellor, assistance will be given in the preparation of applications for the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) scheme operated by the Higher Education Institutions through the Central Applications Office (CAO system).

**State Examinations**

Applications are made for all students deemed in need of Reasonable Accommodations for State Examinations. The procedures of the State Examinations Commission will be strictly adhered to. Any senior student, for whom an application for Reasonable Accommodations is made, may be assessed by a National Educational Psychological Service psychologist prior to the allocation of such accommodations.

**Review**

This policy will be reviewed from time to time.

**Ratification**

This policy was adopted by the board on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014.