



St. Mary's Secondary School

Additional Educational Needs Policy



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Additional Educational Needs Policy

Mission statement

St. Mary's is a Mercy school that is concerned with developing the whole person within a Christian atmosphere. By providing a balance of educational activities, we foster growth in self-esteem and respect for others. We take pride in encouraging high standards of teaching and learning.

St. Mary's is committed to creating a learning environment that is inclusive and supportive of all students in accordance with our mission statement. The term "all students" includes students with additional needs, and in line with the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (EPSEN), we are fully committed to supporting the inclusion of such students, wherever possible, aiming to provide them with an education that occurs alongside their peers who do not have such needs.

However, we acknowledge that there may be instances where the nature or degree of additional needs is such that it would not be in the best interests of the child to be educated alongside their peers, as determined through assessments conducted under this Act, or where it would compromise the effective provision of education for the other students with whom they are educated.

Purpose of Policy

Our AEN policy intends to provide a framework for identifying and supporting students with additional educational needs, while also serving as an important reference document for staff, parents/guardians and students. It outlines the structures and procedures we have put in place to ensure appropriate support is provided to students with additional needs, insofar as resources allocated to the school permit, so that all students are free to participate in school life as far as is reasonably practicable and they will have the opportunity to reach their full potential in an inclusive learning environment.

Definition of Additional Educational Needs

Additional Educational Needs exist where a student experiences barriers to learning or participation that mean they require support beyond that generally provided in order to access the curriculum, participate fully in school life, or progress in their learning. Such needs may arise from learning, physical, sensory, communication, social, emotional, behavioural, language, medical or cognitive factors. These needs may be mild or more significant, temporary or long-term, may change over time, and are addressed on the basis of identified barriers to learning and participation within the school context, rather than diagnosis.



Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEN: Additional Educational Needs

CAMHS: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

CAT: Cognitive Abilities Test

DARE: Disability Access Route to Education

DES: Department of Education

DRT: Drumcondra Reasoning Test

EAL: English as an Additional Language

EPSEN: Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs

GP: General Practitioner

HSE: Health Service Executive

HSCL: Home School Community Liaison

MFL: Modern Foreign Language

NCSE: National Council for Special Education

NCCA: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

NEPS: National Educational Psychological Service

NGRT: New Group Reading Test

RACE: Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations

SEC: State Examinations Commission

SEN: Special Educational Needs

SENO: Special Educational Needs Organiser

SET: Special Education Teacher

SNA: Special Needs Assistant

SSP: Student Support Plan

SSF: Student Support File

TUSLA: Child and Family Agency

WIAT: Wechsler Individual Achievement Test

Legal and Policy Framework

This policy is developed in line with relevant legislation, Department of Education circulars, and guidance issued by relevant national education bodies, as outlined below. It is reviewed on an ongoing basis to reflect updates and ensure continued alignment.



Legislation

- Education Act, 1998
- Education Welfare Act, 2000
- Equal Status Act, 2000
- Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004

Department of Education Circulars

- Circular 0010/2013 – *Scheme of grants towards the purchase of essential assistive technology equipment for pupils with physical or communicative disabilities*
- Circular 0030/2014 – *Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Scheme*
- Circular 0053/2019 – *Exemption from the Study of Irish*
- Circular 0084/2024 – *Advice on the use of assessment instruments/tests for Guidance or for Additional and Special Educational Needs (SEN) in post-primary schools*
- Circular 0064/2024 – *Operation and Deployment of Special Education Teacher Resources*
- Circular 0065/2025 – *Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes*

Guidelines and Advisory Documents

- Department of Education. *Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*
- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). *Continuum of Support – Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools*
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE) (2018). *Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme*
- Department of Education. *Advice on the Use of Assessment Instruments/Tests for Guidance or for Additional and Special Educational Needs in Post-Primary Schools*

State Examinations Commission Documents

- State Examinations Commission. *Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE) – Guidelines for Schools (2026)*
- State Examinations Commission. *Use of Bilingual Dictionaries in the Certificate Examinations*

Programme Statements and Frameworks

- Department of Education / National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). *Junior Cycle Level 1 Programme Statement*
- Department of Education / National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). *Junior Cycle Level 2 Programme Statement*
- Department of Education / National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). *Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Programme Statement*



Current provision for AEN students

In accordance with the Continuum of Support Framework outlined by the Department of Education, we recognise that additional educational needs exist along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe and from short-term to long-term. As a result, students require differing levels of support depending on the nature, intensity, and duration of their needs.

Our approach to supporting students with AEN is structured around the three levels of the Continuum of Support, as illustrated in the Continuum of Support triangle (Figure 1). This model represents a graduated approach to provision, with universal supports forming the foundation for all students, and increasingly targeted and individualised supports provided as students' needs become more complex.

The Continuum of Support provides a framework for a staged and problem-solving approach to the identification and support of students with AEN. Supports are implemented incrementally, beginning with inclusive, classroom-based strategies and progressing, where necessary, to more intensive and individualised interventions. Movement along the continuum is flexible and responsive, informed by ongoing monitoring, assessment, and review of student progress.

The allocation and deployment of Special Education Teaching (SET) resources is organised to ensure timely, flexible, and needs-based support. Students with the greatest level of need receive the most intensive and individualised support, appropriate to and proportional to the complexity and enduring nature of their needs. Students may move between levels of support over time as their needs change, ensuring a responsive and flexible approach to provision.

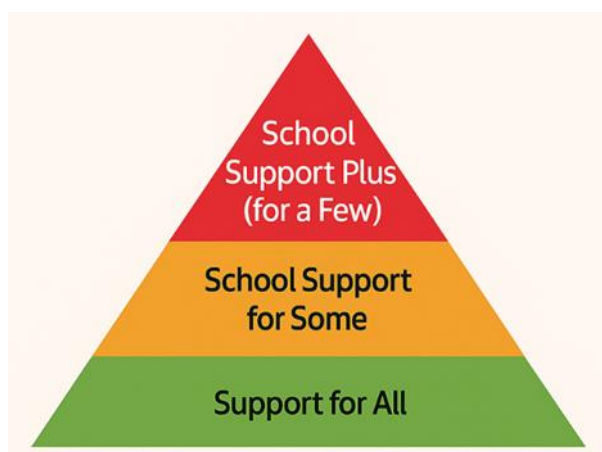


Figure 1: Continuum of Support Triangle (adapted from the Department of Education)



In line with the Continuum of Support outlined above, the following levels of support are implemented in the school.

Level 1: Support for all

Level 1 Support for All focuses on inclusive practice within mainstream classroom settings. In the first instance, meaningful support is provided to students with additional educational needs through their inclusion in mainstream classes alongside their peers in mixed-ability groupings. Subject teachers hold primary responsibility for the education of all students and are expected to familiarise themselves with the individual needs of each student and plan teaching and learning accordingly.

Inclusive practice within the mainstream classroom is supported through a range of strategies, which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Differentiation:
Adapting teaching and learning by varying the level, structure, methods of instruction, resources, and pace to meet the individual learning needs of all students, including AEN students and those who are exceptionally able and who require differentiation or enrichment to reach their potential.
- Facilitation of assistive technology:
Supporting students in the effective use of essential equipment such as hearing aids, C-Pens, laptops, iPads, or other relevant assistive devices.

To further enhance in-class support, some mainstream classes may have a team teacher assigned. This teacher works collaboratively with the class teacher to identify and support students who may require additional assistance. This approach allows students with AEN to be supported in an inclusive and unobtrusive manner, enabling them to engage with and access the curriculum alongside their peers.



Level 2: School support for some

In some cases, following ongoing monitoring and review, it becomes evident that the supports provided at Level 1 within the mainstream classroom are not sufficiently meeting a student's additional needs. In such instances, and following consultation with parents/guardians, a student may be withdrawn from class to receive more targeted instruction from a learning support or resource teacher as part of a smaller group.

Withdrawal for this type of support is usually short term and is designed to provide intensive, focused intervention in the identified area of need while minimising disruption to the student's overall class programme. After an agreed period, a collaborative review of the student's response to intervention takes place. If the student's needs persist, or if ongoing small group support is required in the longer term, a reduction in the curriculum may be considered.

A reduced curriculum is explored only after consultation with parents/guardians, the relevant subject teacher, the Guidance Counsellor, the Deputy Principal, and the AEN Coordinator. The implications of reducing a subject, particularly in relation to senior cycle options, third level pathways, and future career opportunities, are explained clearly in advance of any decision, and signed parental consent is required.

A reduced curriculum may include:

- An exemption from the study of Irish where the criteria set out by the Department of Education are met (see section on Irish exemptions).
- Withdrawal from the study of a Modern Foreign Language (MFL).
- Withdrawal from other subjects in exceptional cases.

Support provided following a curriculum reduction will be aligned to the identified needs of the student and based on the resources available to the school at that time.

As part of targeted support at Level 2, some students may require access to Líos Ciúin, the school's designated quiet and sensory area. Access is based on identified need and may help students regulate, reduce sensory overload, or restore readiness for learning. Use of this space is arranged or timetabled as appropriate and is monitored by the AEN team to ensure it forms an effective part of the student's support plan.



Level 3: School Support Plus for a few

Level 3, *School Support Plus*, is provided for a small number of students whose needs are severe, complex, and enduring, and who require supports beyond those available at Levels 1 and 2. Placement at this level is based on significant and ongoing learning, social, emotional, or physical needs that necessitate intensive and individualised intervention.

Planning and provision at Level 3 may involve consultation with external professionals, including NEPS, health services, and other relevant agencies, to ensure that supports are informed, coordinated, and responsive to the student's needs.

Supports at this level may include, but are not limited to, the following:

One-to-one support

One-to-one teaching or intervention is provided on a very limited basis and only where a student's needs cannot be met through any other means. Such support is typically short term and focused on specific, targeted areas of need.

Counselling Support

Students with AEN may be referred to the Guidance Counsellor for one-to-one support or counselling as required. This could be to provide guidance and support in relation to personal counselling, educational or careers counselling.

Alternative Programmes: L1LP, L2LP, SCL1, SCL2

The Junior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes (L1LP and L2LP), along with the Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes (SCL1 and SCL2), are designed for students who may not be suited to the traditional Junior Cycle or Leaving Certificate programmes and who require a substantially differentiated curriculum. Each programme is individualised to reflect the student's needs, strengths, and learning profile, and focuses on developing essential life skills, personal independence, and preparation for future education, training, or employment. Assessment is continuous and portfolio based.

Students are supported to access the mainstream curriculum and classes as far as their ability allows, and to engage in learning at a pace and level suited to their individual needs.

Consideration for placement on an L1LP, L2LP, SCL1, or SCL2 programme involves consultation between the AEN Coordinator, the AEN Team, relevant teachers, parents/guardians, the student, and external professionals where appropriate (for example, a NEPS psychologist or SENO). Decisions are informed by:



- Educational psychological assessments indicating significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities and very low cognitive ability
- Teacher observations and the student's overall learning profile
- Documentation in the Student Support File showing persistent needs despite interventions at Levels 1 and 2
- Evidence that the traditional Junior or Senior Cycle curriculum is not appropriate to the student's learning needs
- Consideration of the student's best interests and long-term educational and career outcomes

The implications for future educational pathways, training routes, and career opportunities are discussed with parents/guardians during the consultation process. Signed parental consent is required before the student participates in any alternative programme.

Support of Outside Professionals and Agencies

If a student's additional educational needs are complex, severe and/or persistent, they are likely to need intensive support that, with parental consultation, involves engagement with agencies and personnel outside the school team, which may include:

- NEPS- The National Educational Psychological Service
- Educational and Clinical Psychologists
- Occupational Therapists
- Speech and Language Therapists
- NCSE- The National Council for Special Education
- The Visiting Teacher Services for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing or Blind/Visually impaired
- HSE, through the NCSE
- SENCO- Special Education Needs Organiser, through the NCSE
- CAMHS - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, through the HSE
- TUSLA- the Child and Family Agency
- Educational Welfare Officers, through TESS TUSLA
- Associations linked to specific diagnosis e.g., Dyslexia Association of Ireland (DAI), Autism Spectrum Information Advice and Meeting Point (ASIAM)

SNA Support

Students who have significant additional care needs, as outlined in Circular 0030/2014, may require access to Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support. For access to SNA support, a student must have an assessed disability and care needs of such significance that they exceed what can reasonably be provided by the class teacher, support teacher, or other school staff, and beyond what can be met through peers, classroom adjustments, differentiated teaching approaches, assistive technology, or specialist equipment.



The allocation and deployment of SNA support is managed by the school in a flexible, needs-based manner. Priority is given to students with the most significant care needs. The primary function of SNA support is to assist with essential care tasks while supporting the development of the student's independence and participation in school life.

Access to SNA support is reviewed regularly and may be adjusted or re-allocated to reflect the evolving care needs of the student and of other students across the school.

Use of assistive technology equipment for students with AEN

We strive to support AEN students by facilitating the use of assistive technology where it can help them access the curriculum and fully participate in school life, using equipment or devices from the school's resources where available.

Some students with more complex needs may require specialised equipment that is not available through existing school ICT resources. Examples may include specialist laptops or devices with accessibility features such as screen-magnification software, adaptive furniture, assistive listening devices, FM systems, or hearing loops. Where such equipment is deemed essential by professional reports, the Department of Education provides an Assistive Technology support scheme under Circular 0010/2013. For eligible AEN students, the school and relevant professionals will advise parents/guardians on the application process and provide the required supporting documentation.

All equipment purchased through this scheme remains the property of the school. However, in certain cases, students may be permitted to bring the equipment home to support continuity of learning.

Approval for the use of assistive technology in State Examinations is not automatically guaranteed, even where it is recommended in professional reports. Therefore, when considering whether a student may use assistive technology in school-based examinations, the school applies the same criteria as those set out by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) under the Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations (RACE) scheme.

A key requirement of the RACE scheme is that any assistive technology used in State Examinations must be the student's normal way of working. For this reason, the school only recommends and supports the use of assistive technology in examinations where there is clear evidence that the student uses the technology regularly as part of their everyday learning.

By following SEC criteria, the school avoids students becoming dependent on technology that may not be approved and ensures they do not use technology in State Exams that they are not fully competent with. This protects students from being disadvantaged in formal examinations



Support for students whose home language is not English

Students whose home language is not English are identified as English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners. In the first instance, support for EAL learners is provided at Level 1 of the Continuum of Support within the mainstream classroom, where class teachers differentiate instruction as required to enable students to access the curriculum effectively. Based on the student's level of need, and subject to the availability of resources, additional supports may also be provided.

Where deemed necessary, assistive technology, such as laptops or tablet devices, may be used in the classroom to access translation tools, reading supports, or dictionary applications to facilitate learning. All such devices remain the property of the school and must remain on the school premises. These devices may not be used in in-house examinations or State Examinations, in accordance with State Examinations Commission (SEC) regulations. EAL students may, however, use a paper-based bilingual dictionary, in line with SEC guidelines.

Where resources permit, students who score below B1 level on the NCCA Post-Primary EAL Assessment Kit may be withdrawn from class to receive additional language support. This supplementary support is intended to develop English language proficiency, enabling students to participate fully in school life and engage meaningfully with the curriculum. Such support will continue until a review indicates that an appropriate level of proficiency has been achieved.

Where a student chooses not to avail of EAL assessment or to participate in EAL support classes offered, the school will require written confirmation of this decision from a parent or guardian.

Exam Accommodations for AEN students

The scheme of Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE)

In acknowledgement that some students with additional needs may have difficulty accessing examinations or communicating what they know under standard exam conditions, the State Examinations Commission (SEC) operates the Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE) scheme. The purpose of RACE is to remove barriers that prevent a student from accessing the exam or demonstrating their knowledge, allowing them to show what they know and can do in an equitable way.

It is important to note that the presence of additional needs, whether physical, visual, hearing, learning, emotional, or behavioural, does not automatically mean that a student requires, or will be granted, accommodations. Similarly, a recommendation from an outside agency or a professional report does not guarantee eligibility. To qualify for RACE, the school must make a formal application to the SEC, and students must meet the strict eligibility criteria outlined each year in the SEC publication "Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations – Instructions for Schools", which is available on examinations.ie or from the school on request.



Applications will only be submitted by the school when all SEC criteria are met, including school-based evidence confirming that the accommodation is required and appropriate.

Reasonable accommodations in house examinations

Our capacity to emulate the accommodations provided by the SEC for State Examinations for in house exams is limited by the resources available at the time, such as staffing and the availability of suitable rooms. Because of these resource constraints, priority is given to providing exam accommodations to AEN students in their exam year, i.e., Sixth Year and Third Year, who have the greatest level of need and where there is strong supporting evidence that they are likely to meet the SEC's RACE criteria.

Use of Bilingual Translation Dictionaries in house exams and State Exams

In keeping with accommodations provided by the SEC, St. Mary's permits the use of bilingual translation dictionaries for house exams for students whose first language is not English. Students concerned will be notified of this accommodation in advance of the State Exams, and should they wish to avail of it, the school makes an application to the SEC. Bilingual translation dictionaries are not provided by the school, and students must use their own dictionaries, provided these are free from additional personal notes/notation during the examinations.

Use of assistive technology in house exams and State Exams

As outlined previously, students must meet strict criteria to qualify for RACE and be permitted to use assistive technology in state exams. As we cannot assume that a student will meet the RACE criteria, we exercise caution when it comes to permitting the use of assistive technology during in house exams, and we will only recommend it in cases where we are confident that the criteria set by the SEC will be met. This approach aims to prevent a situation where a student could be left without accommodations they have become accustomed to, potentially impacting their performance in the state exams.

Identification of Needs/information gathering and assessment

We have comprehensive procedures in place that proactively and collaboratively identify students with additional needs at every stage of their journey in our school.

The Enrolment Process and transfer to St Mary's:

We have comprehensive procedures in place to proactively and collaboratively identify students with additional needs at every stage of their journey in our school.



Enrolment and Transition to St Mary's

- Parents and guardians are encouraged to notify the school early in the enrolment process if their daughter has additional needs. Following this, the AEN Coordinator will contact parents to discuss the student's needs in more detail. Members of the AEN Team are also available during the Open Evening to speak with parents about the supports the school may be able to provide.
- Once a place is accepted, parents are asked to submit any relevant documentation or information, such as professional reports, Irish exemption certificates, details of involvement with outside agencies, or information about assistive technology already in use.
- Parents are also encouraged to consent to the sharing of information from the child's primary school, including the Educational Passport. Where applicable, a NEPS Student Transfer Form may also be provided, containing details of previous assessments, interventions, and supports.
- Incoming students complete the Drumcondra Reasoning Test (DRT) in St Mary's Secondary School during the final term of primary school. The test is held in the evening, and the date will be communicated to parents once finalised. This assessment helps identify individual and group learning profiles and assists with appropriate resource allocation. Parents are contacted if test scores may indicate additional educational needs.
- A transfer meeting involving the primary school, parents or guardians, and relevant professionals may also be arranged, where necessary, to facilitate the sharing of additional information and to support continuity of essential supports.
- Based on the information reviewed, the AEN Team places each student at the appropriate level of the Continuum of Support and works to ensure continuity of support where necessary.

Formation of First Year Class Groups

The information gathered during the transition process is also used to help form First Year class groups. Class groups are created through a transparent and equitable process that ensures an even distribution of students with additional needs and a balanced range of abilities across all classes, enabling teachers to provide support effectively. The process is as follows

- The AEN Team reviews relevant information to ensure that students with additional needs are placed appropriately where they can access the supports they require.
- When AEN needs are balanced across the year group, students are assigned to classes alphabetically. Students from the same primary school are distributed across different classes while, where possible, ensuring that each student is placed with at least one familiar peer unless otherwise requested.
- Once class groups are finalised, it is school policy that students remain in their assigned class. Requests to move students between classes or to specific teachers cannot be accommodated, as it would undermine the stability and integrity of the class-formation process, which is communicated clearly to parents at enrolment.



During time in St Mary's:

The school remains highly attentive to identified needs and vigilant to the possibility of new or emerging needs among students throughout their time in St Mary's. Identification is an ongoing, collaborative process that involves teachers, parents, students, and the AEN Team.

- During the first term, all First Year and Transition Year students complete the Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4), which helps identify their strengths, needs, and learning profiles.
- Where appropriate, additional standardised assessments such as the New Group Reading Test (NGRT) or the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT-III T) may also be administered. The outcomes of these assessments inform interventions, classroom support, and, where relevant, the application for reasonable accommodations.
- Parents will be contacted directly if concerns arise from standardised test results. Otherwise, results are retained on file and may be shared with parents on request. Parents are also welcome to discuss their daughter's results with the AEN Coordinator at Parent-Teacher Meetings if they wish.
- Outcomes of standardised assessments are also taken into consideration when determining suitable Senior Cycle programmes and subject options, and they may be used to support the Guidance Counsellor in completing the DARE application process in Sixth Year.
- Teachers play a central role in the early identification of needs and share any concerns with the AEN Team. Teachers also contribute significantly to the identification of students who may require exam accommodations and providing samples of student work and classroom observations to support a possible RACE application.
- Student voice is central to the school's process of identifying, reviewing, and supporting additional needs. Students are encouraged to communicate any difficulties they experience so that their perspective informs the supports put in place.
- The AEN Team works closely with the Student Support Team to monitor academic performance, attendance, engagement, and overall wellbeing. Any inconsistencies, changes in performance, or emerging concerns are investigated so that supports can be provided in a timely and appropriate manner, if required.
- Staff are kept informed of relevant information to support students with additional needs through meetings, briefings, Compass notifications, email, and direct communication where necessary. Systems such as flags and colour-coding on Compass help keep staff alert to students with specific needs or supports in place.
- New information may emerge at any point from a variety of sources, including parent communication, teacher observations, student self-advocacy, Parent-Teacher Meetings, or new professional reports. Such information is reviewed as it is made available and incorporated into the Student Support File where appropriate.
- The transition from Junior Cycle to Senior Cycle is another important point of review. Students are supported in making informed choices around subjects and programmes. Guidance is provided where their learning profile suggests that an alternative Senior Cycle pathway may be more appropriate to their needs and ability.



- While it is not recommended that students change their subject choices, and changing is not always possible due to timetable constraints, class capacity, or option-line availability, guidance is provided to any student who wishes to explore a subject change. The Guidance Counsellor advises students on the implications for future study, level options, and career opportunities, while the AEN Coordinator offers guidance based on the student's learning profile, including their ability to access the subject, manage the workload, and catch up on missed content.

Enrolment into other years

Students enrolling into the school outside the main First Year intake, whether during First Year or at any other point, follow a structured admissions process to ensure that any additional educational needs are identified.

- Parents or guardians are required to complete an enrolment form and attend a meeting with the Principal. During this meeting, any additional educational needs are discussed.
- Upon acceptance of a place, parents are asked to provide any relevant documentation, such as professional reports, details of involvement with outside agencies (for example CAMHS, Mindspace, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy), Irish exemption certificates, and information on any assistive technology currently in use.
- The student's current school is then requested to complete a Student Transfer Form, which provides important information regarding additional needs. This may include details of existing supports, recent school reports, standardised test scores, and any other relevant background information.
- All information received is reviewed by the AEN Coordinator, who will contact parents if further clarification or discussion is required. The student will then be placed at the appropriate level of the Continuum of Support. Where additional support is deemed necessary, and where resources permit, a Student Support Plan may be developed.
- Class placement is determined by the programme, subjects and levels selected by the student within that programme, and by the availability of places within those classes, having due regard to the student's identified educational needs.



Structure of the AEN Team

The school has a core team that meets regularly to coordinate the support of AEN students. The team consists of the following:

- The Principal
- The Deputy Principal
- AEN Coordinators (Junior and Senior)
- EAL coordinator
- SNA's
- The Guidance Counsellor
- HSCL Coordinator

Role of Parents

We affirm the vital role parents play in their child's education, as outlined in the Education Act (1998) and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004). We are committed to involving parents in their daughters' education and encourage them to share any relevant information regarding their daughter's additional needs.

This includes notifying the school of any involvement with outside agencies such as CAMHS, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, or other services that support the student's wellbeing or learning. Access to such information enables the school to plan appropriate supports in a timely and informed manner.

We strive to maintain open and regular communication with parents by providing updates on their daughter's progress and by being available by phone, email, or appointment to discuss any concerns. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend Parent-Teacher Meetings, where the AEN Coordinator and members of the AEN Team, including the student's support teachers, are available to discuss AEN-related matters and review the Student Support Plan.

Where additional support is offered or recommended and a decision is made by the student and parent/guardian not to avail of such provision, a signed letter from a parent or guardian will be required to confirm this decision and excuse the student from participation.

Psychological/Professional Reports

Assessment reports completed by external professionals, such as Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, CAMHS, GPs, and other specialists, can provide valuable insight into a student's additional needs. Parents are encouraged to share these reports with the school as soon as they are available so they can be reviewed by the AEN Team. Findings and recommendations may be used to inform supports where appropriate and may also be useful at a later stage, for example, when completing a DARE application in Sixth Year.



Having a professional report does not guarantee additional support or exam accommodations, and it may not be possible to implement all recommendations due to resource limitations or the needs observed within the school setting. Conversely, the absence of a report does not prevent a student from receiving support. The school prioritises supports based on needs that are clearly evidenced over time within the school environment and that cannot be met, in the first instance, through classroom-based support from the subject teacher.

If the school believes a student may benefit from a professional assessment, parents or guardians will be informed. Likewise, parents are encouraged to notify the school if they intend to seek an assessment. The school will advise on possible assessment pathways and will work collaboratively with families and relevant professionals throughout the process.

NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service) Assessments

NEPS operates within the constraints of limited resources and time, with each school receiving a small allocation for educational assessments. Priority is given to those with the highest level of need, exhibiting significant challenges in overall ability and with academic-cognitive discrepancies that cannot be attributed to attendance, concentration, attention, or behavioural issues. NEPS typically does not conduct assessments for external agencies or services upon request (e.g. CAMHS, DAI) unless they, in consultation with the school, determine that the criteria mentioned above have been met. This approach ensures that NEPS resources are effectively allocated to address the needs of students within the school who require the most support.

Irish exemptions

All students are required to study Irish unless they have an official exemption, which must be submitted with the enrolment form. To obtain an Irish exemption, a formal application must be made to the Principal. The Principal may grant an exemption only in the exceptional circumstances outlined in Circular 0055/2022.

When making decisions about Irish exemptions, the school considers not only school-based literacy attainment tests but also evidence related to the student's ongoing support needs, their response to intervention, and the level of need documented in the Student Support File. While professional reports may be helpful, they are not the primary supporting document nor an essential requirement for granting an exemption. A recommendation for an Irish exemption contained in a professional report does not guarantee approval; all criteria outlined in the circular must be fully met.

Parents and students are encouraged to seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor before applying for or implementing an Irish exemption, as it may have implications for future education and career opportunities.

While every effort is made to arrange suitable learning support classes for AEN students who do not study Irish, the provision of such support is dependent on timetable constraints and the availability of



resources. Where additional support can be provided, it will be skills-based and targeted at the student's identified areas of need.

Modern Foreign Language (MFL) Withdrawal

To maximise future education, training, and career opportunities, we strongly recommend that students study a Modern Foreign Language. MFL is compulsory at Junior Cycle however, there may be circumstances in which withdrawal from MFL at Junior Cycle is considered appropriate for students with additional needs (see Level 2 of the Continuum of Support).

Such decisions are made on a case-by-case basis following consultation with the student, parents or guardians, the MFL subject teacher, and relevant members of the AEN Team. This collaborative process ensures that the decision is fully informed and in the best interests of the student's learning and wellbeing.

If, following consultation, it is agreed that withdrawal from MFL is the most appropriate option, both the student and their parents or guardians will be required to sign a consent form confirming that they understand the implications for future subject choices, Senior Cycle pathways, and third-level or career opportunities.

The school will make every effort to provide appropriate alternative learning opportunities for AEN students who withdraw from MFL. These supports may include skills-based additional learning support. However, such provision is dependent on timetable constraints and the availability of resources.

It is important to note that holding an Irish exemption does not automatically entitle a student to withdraw from an MFL, and withdrawing from an MFL does not qualify a student for an Irish exemption. Each decision is considered separately and must meet the relevant criteria.

Student Support Files

The school maintains a Student Support File (SSF) for all students. This file includes academic records, attendance data, and other relevant information relating to each student's educational progress and wellbeing. A Student Support Plan (SSP) is an individualised learning plan that forms part of the SSF for students with additional needs who require support beyond the mainstream classroom, specifically those at Level 2 (School Support for Some) and Level 3 (School Support Plus for a Few) on the Continuum of Support. The SSP is a live, working document that outlines the student's strengths, priority needs, recommended strategies and supports, targets, and review outcomes. It is shared with relevant teachers and updated regularly to ensure consistency and continuity of support across the school.

The development of the SSP is a collaborative and transparent process and the level of detail it contains varies in accordance with the nature and severity of the student's needs. The AEN Coordinator leads the process by gathering information on the student's strengths and needs from relevant sources, which may include primary schools, parents/guardians, subject teachers,



external professionals where appropriate, and the student. This information informs the selection of suitable supports, interventions, and accommodations tailored to the learner's needs.

Teachers providing additional support set specific targets for the student, based on the needs identified within the SSP. These targets are monitored, reviewed, and adjusted as necessary to reflect the student's progress. The AEN Coordinator evaluates progress recorded in the SSF and this information to guide decisions regarding the continuation, modification, or withdrawal of supports. Parents/guardians are involved throughout the development, review, and revision of the SSP.

Where relevant, students who receive SNA support will also have a Personal Pupil Plan (PPP) included in the SSP. The PPP outlines identified care needs and targets aimed at promoting the student's independence.

Sharing of information

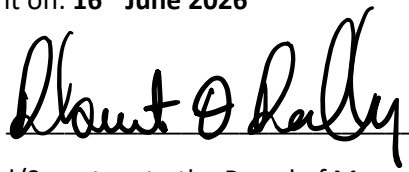
The school adheres to the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) principles to safeguard the personal information of all students. Confidentiality of documentation related to the additional needs of our students is ensured by storing it securely on their personal file in a locked cabinet accessible only to members of the AEN team. For the purpose of supporting AEN students, relevant information is disseminated to teachers on a need to know basis. Information essential for supporting AEN students is recorded on the Student Support Plan (SSP) and accessible to relevant teachers through the secure platforms of Compass and Teams.

More detailed arrangements for safeguarding confidential information are set out in the schools Data Protection Policy.

Ratification

This *AEN Policy* was ratified by the Board of Management on: **16th June 2026**

Signed: 
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: 
Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management