Willow Park Junior School



Learning Support/ Special Education Teaching Policy

April 2026

1. Introduction

This policy is informed by guidelines from the Department of Education and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

Our aim is to ensure that all pupils can participate fully in the curriculum and achieve their individual potential in a supportive, inclusive and child-centred environment.

Learning Support refers to the continuum of provisions put in place by the school to identify and address learning difficulties. This includes early intervention, classroom differentiation and supplementary teaching, delivered in a flexible and responsive manner.

2. Guiding Principles

- All children have a right to access a broad, balanced, and appropriate education.
- Early identification and intervention are critical in preventing the escalation of learning difficulties.
- Inclusive practice is the responsibility of all staff and underpins all teaching and learning.
- A whole-school approach is essential to effectively support pupils with additional needs.
- Collaboration between teachers, parents and pupils is central to success.
- The Continuum of Support framework guides identification, planning and intervention.
- Interventions are evidence-based and regularly reviewed.

3. Aims of Learning Support

- To identify pupils with additional educational needs as early as possible.
- To provide targeted support to enable pupils to access the curriculum effectively.
- To develop pupils' confidence, independence and motivation to learn.
- To support teachers in planning, differentiation and assessment.
- To monitor and track pupil progress systematically across the school.
- To ensure continuity of support as pupils progress through the school.

4. Model of Provision

Support is provided in line with the **Continuum of Support Framework**, ensuring a staged and responsive approach.

Classroom Support (Support for All)

- High-quality teaching is the first and most important support.
- Differentiation includes:
    - Adjusting content, pace and teaching methods
    - Use of visual supports, concrete materials and ICT
    - Flexible grouping and peer support
- Early intervention strategies are implemented in classes.
- Classroom-based assessment informs teaching and intervention.

School Support (Support for Some)

- Pupils requiring additional support receive targeted intervention from SET teachers.
- Support may be delivered through:
    - In-class support (team teaching/station teaching)
    - Small group withdrawal
- A **Student Support Plan (SSP)** is developed outlining:
    - Priority learning needs
    - Specific targets
    - Teaching strategies and resources
- Interventions are typically short-term and focused.

School Support Plus (Support for a Few)

- For pupils with more complex or enduring needs.
- Individualised programmes are developed, often informed by professional reports.
- Greater intensity and frequency of support may be provided.
- A **Student Support Plan Plus** is developed and reviewed regularly.
- Close collaboration with parents and external agencies is essential.

5. Student Support Plans

We use a Student Support Plans to plan and document interventions and to track a pupil's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates us in documenting progress and needs over time and assists us in providing an appropriate level of support to pupils, in line with their level of need.

These Student Support Plans should:

- Include information from any reports from outside agencies
- Be created by the Learning Support teacher in consultation with the class teacher
- Be reviewed termly
- Be sent to parents for approval

These plans should clearly include:

  - Baseline data
  - Specific targets
  - Teaching strategies
  - Review dates

Progress will be monitored by:

  - Teacher observation (Both class teacher and Learning Support teacher)
  - Work samples
  - Assessment results

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Principal

- Provides leadership in the development and implementation of SEN provision.
- Ensures a whole-school approach to inclusion.
- Supports ongoing professional development of staff.

Dean of Learning Support / SEN Coordinator

- Maintains and updates the register of pupils receiving support.
- Coordinates SET and SNA timetables and deployment of resources.

- Administer and interpret diagnostic assessments.
- Leads whole-school tracking of pupil progress (e.g. assessment data).
- Organises and chairs regular SEN team meetings.
- Supports staff in implementing best practice in SEN.
- Oversees the development and review of Student Support Plans.
- Ensures appropriate record-keeping and compliance with policy.

Special Education Teachers (SET)

- Provide targeted, evidence-based interventions.
- Collaborate closely with class teachers in planning and delivery.
- Develop, implement and review Student Support Plans.
- Maintain detailed records of pupil progress and interventions.
- Contribute to whole-school approaches to literacy and numeracy.
- Liaises with parents and advises on accessing external supports.

Class Teachers

- Retain primary responsibility for all pupils in their class.
- Implement differentiated teaching strategies.
- Identify pupils who may require additional support.
- Collaborate with SET teachers and implement suggested strategies.
- Contribute to the development and review of support plans.

Special Needs Assistants (SNA/Classroom Assistant)

- Support pupils with care needs to access the curriculum.
- Assist with the implementation of learning programmes under teacher direction.
- Promote independence and inclusion.

Parents/Guardians

- Share relevant information with the school.
- Support learning at home.
- Participate in meetings and reviews.
- Engage positively with interventions and recommendations.

7. Identification and Selection of Pupils

The school has set guidelines on Facilitating Assessments and Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Where concerns regarding a pupil's learning or development are identified, the following steps will apply:

1. Initial Consultation with the Class Teacher (Classroom Support)

Parents are encouraged to raise concerns in the first instance with their child's class teacher. Classroom-based supports and differentiation strategies will be discussed and implemented as appropriate.

2. Raising Awareness / SEN Concern Form

Where concerns persist, a Raising Awareness or SEN Concern Form will be completed collaboratively by the parents and class teacher. This helps to formally record areas of concern, existing supports and agreed next steps.

3. School Support

A structured observation and support period of approximately six weeks will take place. During this time:

- The class teacher, the assigned Learning Support / SEN teacher, and parents will work collaboratively
- Targeted in-school supports and interventions will be implemented
- Progress will be monitored and reviewed

4. School Support Plus

If a pupil continues to present with ongoing or more complex needs, supports will be extended over the Term or Academic Year.

At this stage:

- The pupil will receive more intensive and targeted support
- Ongoing monitoring, assessment, and review will take place
- Individual targets may be developed and reviewed regularly
- Communication with parents will be ongoing and central to the process.

5. External Assessments and Professional Consultation

At this stage, we strongly recommend that assessments are only considered after ALL prior steps have been taken.

Following consultation with the Learning Support / SEN Department, the school will:

- Advise parents of recommended, qualified professionals
- Support families in facilitating additional assessments with form filling, etc.
- Use professional reports, where shared with the school, to inform support planning

Throughout all stages of the Continuum of Support, the school is committed to:

- Working in partnership with parents
- Ensuring a strengths-based and child-centred approach
- Maintaining confidentiality and respecting the sensitive nature of all information

Pupils needs/concerns are also identified through a combination of:

- Teacher observation and professional judgement
- Screening assessments (e.g. early literacy and numeracy)
- Standardised testing (where appropriate)
- Diagnostic assessments by SET teachers
- Parental input

A flexible approach is adopted, with pupils moving in and out of support as needs change.

8. Irish exemptions

Willow Park Junior School follows the Department of Education guidelines on granting Irish Exemptions. An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted only in exceptional circumstances. The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the Principal, following detailed discussion with all relevant parties. A decision to grant an exemption will only be considered in the circumstances set out below as per Section 2.2 of circular 0054/2022 which is linked here and outlined below:

Circular 0054/2022 Exemptions from the Study of Irish

Exemptions from the study of Irish – primary

Applications should be made in writing to the school principal.

9. Approaches to Support

A range of evidence-based approaches are used by the Learning Support department when providing support. These are including but not limited to:

- Small group instruction with focused targets
- Individualised teaching where necessary
- Early intervention programmes (e.g. phonological awareness, auditory and visual processing)
- Structured literacy approaches for pupils with dyslexia
- Use of multisensory and explicit teaching methods
- Integration of ICT and assistive technology where appropriate

10. Assessment and Record Keeping

A range of assessment tools are used by the Learning Support department. These are including but not limited to:

- Teacher-designed tasks
- Screening tools
- Diagnostic assessments
- Standardised tests (as appropriate)

Records maintained include:

- Assessment results
- Support plans
- Progress notes

Records are stored securely in line with GDPR requirements.

Assessment data is used to inform planning, grouping and resource allocation.

11. Collaboration with External Agencies

External assessments from external agencies should only be considered once all other steps have been taken, as detailed in Part 7.

The school works closely with external services where appropriate, including:

- Speech and Language Therapists

- Occupational Therapists
- Educational Psychologists
- Early intervention teams and other relevant professionals

Recommendations from reports are incorporated into planning and reviewed regularly.

12. Parental Involvement

Parents are central to the success of learning support. At Willow Park Junior School we ensure:

- Parents are informed when their child is selected for support.
- Parental consent is sought when required.
- Parents are provided with practical strategies to support learning at home.
- Communication may take place through meetings, reports, or informal updates.

13. Inclusion and Equality

Willow Park Junior school is committed to:

- Providing an inclusive learning environment for all pupils
- Ensuring equality of access to all aspects of school life
- Valuing diversity and promoting respect
- Supporting pupils' social and emotional wellbeing alongside academic development

14. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every 2–3 years, or more frequently if required, in response to:

- Updates from the Department of Education or NCSE
- School self-evaluation findings
- Ongoing feedback from staff, parents and pupils

15. Ratification & Communication:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management.

Review Timetable:

This policy will be reviewed in 3 years time (and in the interim, be amended as deemed necessary) - in consultation with the staff, Parents and Board of management.

Ratified by the Board of Management

Peter McCabe Chairman's Signature

Date: 18/05/2026