



ST DECLAN'S COLLEGE

The staff, the Parents Council, the Student Council and the Board of Management of St Declan's College were consulted during the formation of this policy.

This policy operates within the broader framework of the School Plan and other policies associated therein.

Ratified by the Board of Management on:

Proposed Policy Review date :


Chairperson, Board of Management


Secretary, Board of Management



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1. Introduction/Vision

This policy is in keeping with the Education Act 1998, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004, the Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2018 and Circular 14/2017 (New Model of Allocation), the corresponding Guidelines for Post Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (2017) and The NEPS Continuum of Support.

St. Declan's College is an inclusive school and no student will be refused admission on discriminatory grounds as referred to in Admissions Policy. No person in the college will be discriminated against on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, physical or intellectual disability or other additional educational needs, race, Traveller community. This list is not exhaustive.

The principles of inclusivity and respect are enshrined in St. Declan's College and are lived out as much as possible in the day-to-day life of the school. All students are members of a tutor group and a year group. The school aims to provide a caring, happy and safe environment to foster a love of lifelong learning and to develop each person's academic, physical, moral, cultural and spiritual potential.

St. Declan's College aspires to be a responsibly inclusive school. The principles of inclusivity and respect are enshrined in the Mission Statement. Responsible inclusion means working towards what is best for the student. To have responsible inclusion, St. Declan's College has a curriculum, which includes all aspects of education in school life, (hidden, implied, social skills, life skills, extra-curricular activities etc.) and that considers curriculum as a process and education as development of students rather than content and product.

Inherent in this is an understanding that individual needs or learning differences should not prevent a student from flourishing in St. Declan's College. It is our aspiration that if a child is assessed or diagnosed as needing support, they will receive whatever assistance they require to enable them to reach their full potential (subject to this support being resourced by the Department of Education and Skills). This will involve a whole-school approach to supporting the child with individual needs.

2. Aims

St. Declan's College aims to:

- Ensure that students with individual needs are educated in a responsibly inclusive environment.
- Ensure that students with additional educational needs are identified and provided for in a fair and equitable manner so that their learning potential and their sense of self-worth and dignity is developed and respected.



- Give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children who have a disability or who have other special educational needs, as they relate to education.
- Provide, in line with the new model of allocation, a level and quality of education appropriate to the needs and abilities of all students in the school.
- Affirm that students with additional educational needs have the same right to avail of, and benefit from, education as students who do not have those needs.
- Provide for the involvement of parents in the education of their children and in the decision-making process in relation to the children.
- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at school and at home.
- Acknowledge the primary responsibility of the subject teacher and work to support them in meeting the needs of the student.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Ensure that students with individual needs are offered a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum and they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the individual needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.
- Ensure that additional educational needs are not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole College and community.
- Co-operate and work closely with the National Council for Special Educational Needs (NCSE) and other agencies with regard to the education of students with special educational needs.
- Co-ordinate the advice, guidance and support of other agencies in supporting students with additional educational needs.
- Provide programmes that meet the individual needs of a student.
- Ensure that students can achieve the learning outcomes and intentions of their individual programmes where appropriate in the mainstream class.
- Set high standards for students with special educational needs and provide them with appropriate guidance, encouraging them to achieve their full potential.
- Ensure the effective and efficient use of resources.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of practice in support of students with additional educational needs.



3. The Student

All students attending St. Declan's College are unique. Some students attending St. Declan's College have a variety of individual support needs. We aspire to put the student and not the need first.

These needs may include (but are not restricted to) the following:

3.1 Physical Disability

For example, hearing or visual impairment, wheelchair user, epilepsy, diabetes, cystic fibrosis and co-ordination difficulties.

3.2 Emotional/Behavioural Disability

While some of these students can present challenges with the right support and/or medication the students can thrive in a "mainstream" environment.

3.3 Specific Learning Difficulty

Dyslexia	difficulty reading
Hyperlexia	difficulty with comprehension
Dyscalculia	difficulty with numbers
Dysgraphia	difficulty with writing
Dyspraxia	difficulty with motor skills

3.4 General Learning Disability (GLD)

Students can present with Borderline Mild, Mild, Moderate or Severe and Profound General Learning Disability. Teachers of students with GLD can access a variety of teaching tools and advice from the SEN Team, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Guidelines for students with GLD and the Special Education Support Services (SESS). The College is guided by outside agencies working with the student regarding their education.

3.5 Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Autism is a condition that involves difficulties with

- Social Interaction
- Language and Communication
- Behaviour

Many students on the Autistic Spectrum when supported can succeed or exceed expectations in the responsibly inclusive environment of St. Declan's College. Some students will require the support of our ASD classroom due to more profound or complicated traits of autism.

3.6 English as an Additional Language (EAL)



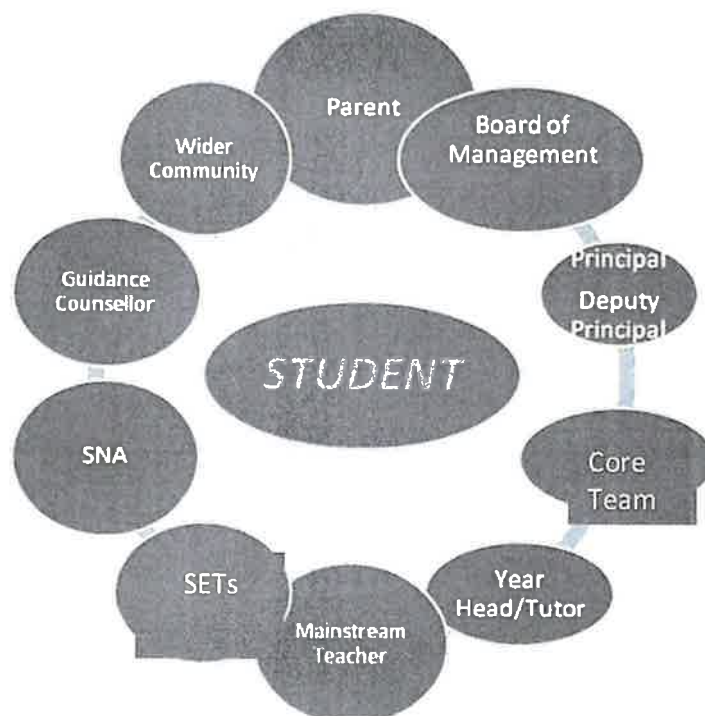
English as an Additional Language is described as a temporary difficulty with accessing the curriculum due to a language deficit. This deficit can and will, with intervention, improve over time.

3.7 Giftedness

Gifted students can also find secondary education extremely stressful or distressing and may struggle to fit in. Our school also endeavours to address the needs of the particularly able students, using tactics such as differentiated teaching styles and individual support where deemed necessary.

4. The SEN Team

The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Team comprises of; the Student with SEN, Parents, the Board of Management, Principal, Deputy Principals, SEN Core Team Teachers, Year Heads and Tutors, Subject teachers, SETs, SNAs, Guidance Counsellor and outside-supporting agencies.



4.1 Students

Students have a critical role to play in the development and evaluation of their own learning.

The Student can:

- Become more independent as learners and are encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning.



- Become successful as learners and better able to develop skills and strategies to maximise their own learning and to become critical thinkers.
- Become more aware of different teaching and learning styles – Meta-cognition.
- Contribute to the development of their support plan.
- Become more aware of the importance and value of working co-operatively with others.
- Engage to the best of their ability in the different communities of the school.
- Achieve their potential.

4.2 Parents/Guardian

Where the word “parent” is used, it is understood to refer also to “guardian” if appropriate. The effectiveness of any assessment or intervention will be crucially influenced by the involvement of the student’s parents as per the Department Education Act 1998, ‘the parent is the primary educator’.

- Parents will access information through the College website regarding SEN ie The Inclusion Policy.
- Parents have a central role to play in the College transition programmes, primary to secondary and secondary to tertiary.
- Throughout the year further updates and details will be communicated to parents. In return parents are expected to keep the relevant member of the Core Team updated with developments from their perspective. They are also expected to work closely with the SEN team to make their child’s learning experience as positive as possible.
- Parents are invited to contact the relevant member of the Core Team during the year in addition to meeting the SET teachers at Parent/Teacher meetings.
- Parents are encouraged to attend incoming First Year induction meetings where they obtain further information from the SENCO regarding ASN.
- Permission in writing is sought from parents if a student is to be referred for assessment. A meeting is arranged to discuss the outcome of the assessment, with a view to creating and developing and reviewing an support plan.
- Parents are expected to support the work of the school with the student and to ensure the correct use and maintenance of any aids or equipment that are provided for the student.

4.3 Board of Management

Ultimate responsibility for the education of children with individual needs in St. Project’s College rests with the Board of Management.

The Board and the Principal acting on its behalf will:



- Work with the staff and SEN team to monitor the implementation of the Inclusion Policy and the SEN programme on an on-going basis to ensure best practice.
- Promote a whole-school approach to special educational provision.
- Will also appoint various staff to operate the programme.

4.4 Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the College's policies.

The Principal will:

- Sanction exemption from certain subjects as requested. In relation to Irish please see Minister of Education's instruction to Management in the following link: https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-andForms/ActiveCirculars/ppc10_94.pdf
- Ensure adequate timetabling of hours for educational support.
- Facilitate meetings of, and in-service training for the SEN team.

4.5 Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators will have overall responsibility for the management of the daily operations of the SEN team. The Co-ordinators will undertake duties such as RACE Testing and applications, AT applications and coordinating, assessment as needed, timetabling of lockers and the Cubbie, Irish Exemption applications, and SNA Timetables. This list is not exhaustive. These duties are reviewed regularly and may change to ensure the priorities of the SEN team are addressed. The special roles and responsibilities of personnel are as described in the DES publication "Inclusion of Students with Special Needs Post Primary Guidelines 2007". The Core Team will meet regularly with the SEN Coordinators. The SEN Coordinators will also meet regularly with the Principal / Deputy Principal.

4.6 Care Team

Teachers involved in the Care Team will participate in the SEN programme in St. Declan's College, working with the SEN Team on an on-going basis to provide supports and services to the relevant students. The team includes the Principal, Deputy Principal and Guidance Counsellor. The Team is joined by Year Heads and SEN Coordinators/ SEN Core Team members when necessary.

4.7 SEN Core Team

A team of staff will teach individual and small groups of students requiring learning support. A coordinator will be appointed to each year group. Year Group coordinators will be involved in the following activities:-

- Develop Student Support Files for these students.



- Offer advice to subject teachers and other departments on employing differentiated teaching methods and resources in their subject teaching.
- Liaise with Year Heads re specific requirements for students in their year group.
- Liaise with Parents/ Guardians if and when required.
- The Core Team will meet regularly with the SEN Coordinators regarding the support needs of their year group.
- The Core Team will meet regularly with the Special Needs Assistants providing care and support to students in their year group.
- Liaise with external agencies if requested to do so by management or the SEN Coordinators. Core Team members will be required to assist in the testing of students eg. RACE etc.

4.8 Subject Teachers

The subject teacher has a key role in bringing about the successful inclusion of students with additional educational needs in mainstream classes and in the ASD class. The class teacher has primary responsibility for the educational progress of all students in his/her class. It is particularly important that all class teachers create a class room environment that accommodates and takes account of learning and physical difficulties. It is expected that teachers will implement differentiated approaches to teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that the skills of all students, including students with SEN are developed.

Subject teachers will make themselves aware of the special educational needs of students in their classes. Attainment levels in literacy and numeracy plus a mini profile of all pupils with a psychological assessment is made available to all teachers at the first staff meetings of the new school year and is available via ScholWise and the SEN Register (on Staff Noticeboard on padlet and hard copy from the Principal). Teachers take steps to inform themselves of the additional needs of any student in their classes and to bring any new concerns regarding students to the relevant Core Team members.

The subject teacher also plays an important role in the early identification of students with SEN. The subject teacher is alert to the possibility of general and specific learning difficulties and brings their concerns to the attention of the SEN team. A key element of successful provision for students with SEN is a high level of consultation and co-operation between the class teacher and the SEN team. A subject teacher, tutor or Year Head can refer any student they are concerned about to the SEN Core Team member and/or SEN Coordinator.

The academic progress of students through the school rests in the first instance with the mainstream class teacher. In order to ensure that, as a school, we meet the needs of all our students with additional educational needs, all teachers are encouraged to:-

- Be aware of the school's policy and procedures for dealing with students with SEN



- Seek advice from the SEN Co-ordinator and/or relevant Core Team member regarding students with SEN
- Take responsibility for their own continuous professional development particularly with regard to common difficulties, e.g. Dyslexia
- Develop an attitude of ownership to the education of students in their classes with SEN
- Plan how to most effectively engage the SNA, where relevant, in consultation with the SEN Coordinators/ Core Team members.
- Support/encourage independence in the student; this is particularly important for Senior Cycle students.

4.8 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

Depending on an allocation being granted, an SNA will cater for the care needs and particular non-educational difficulties of some students.

The SNA will provide assistance as required which could be in the area of student organisation, extra-curricular activities, helping teachers in the supervision of students with SEN, or helping students to become more independent and self-reliant. Students are granted "Access to SNA Support" and this could mean that the number of students in receipt of Access to SNA Support can be greater than the number of SNAs allocated to the school. In this case, the Principal and SEN Coordinators must assign access based on primary care needs. Therefore, students may be in some classes without SNA support. SNA support may also be provided at entrance assessment. SNA's should be involved in training and attending meetings relevant to their role. They will also carry out duties as assigned by the Principal/Deputy Principal and SEN Coordinators in accordance with the school's SNA Guidelines which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

4.9 Guidance Counsellor

As a member of the SEN team, the Guidance Counsellor will:

- Work with members of the SEN team in facilitating the education of students with SEN and their inclusion in the College.
- Liaise with SEN Team in relation to DARE, HEAR, RACE applications to ensure appropriate accommodations are in place for State Exams and in the CAO process.
- Counselling in personal, educational and career development.
- Provide career information.
- Present at the Options Information Evening for students and parents progressing to Senior Cycle.
- Consult with parents and staff.
- Provide vocational preparation – job search skills, preparation for work experience.
- Work closely with Year Heads and the SEN team to identify students requiring support.
- Facilitate individual appointments for students in 3rd year, Transition Year and Leaving Certificate year groups to support them in making career decisions.



- Advising students and parents on subject choices.

4.10 Outside Agencies

St. Declan's College has fostered and maintained positive links with a significant number of outside agencies that support our students.

These include:

- National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- Special Education Support Services (SESS)
- State Examinations Commission (SEC)
- Tusla
- Middletown Centre for Autism
- Outside Agencies – both public and private services to include:
 - Psychologists
 - Clinical psychologists
 - Psychiatrists
 - Occupational therapists
 - HSE day services (opportunities for school leavers, meetings held in school)
 - Speech and language therapists
 - Medical practitioners

This list is not exhaustive and the School will develop further links with outside agencies as the needs of the students dictate.

It may be necessary to hold case conferences with relevant professional experts with the permission and knowledge of the student's parents (and often their attendance) in order to determine the best approach and provision for that student.

It may be necessary to complete questionnaires/forms from these agencies regarding our students. These forms are filled with the permission of the relevant parents and always returned directly to the supporting agent.

5. Identifying Students with Individual Needs and Learning Differences

5.1 Access to Support

Since September 2017, schools have the autonomy to allocate teaching resources based on the level of a student's need, rather than on the basis of diagnosis.

Decisions on the support offered to students will be made based on a number of criteria. These include, but are not limited to:

- Information gathered from a psychological assessment (where the student has presented with same).



- Information gathered from parents.
- Information gathered from primary school.
- Teacher referrals: student's learning, emotional, behavioural and social needs are evaluated. The Core Team will gather all the relevant information and consult with school management, the parents and the student.
- Formal and informal school assessment
- Observation by teachers.
- Communication with outside agencies.
- Student self-referral.

A student plan is then developed to support the student. This plan will be made available to all staff, monitored and reviewed and student progress will be recorded.

5.2 Methods of Identifying Students with Individual Needs and Learning Differences

(i) Pre-enrolment:

- The SEN Coordinators are in contact with feeder schools.
- The SEN Coordinators, Guidance Counsellor and First Year Core Team member and Year Head works with feeder schools on a transfer programme, as far in advance as possible.
- On acceptance of their child's place in the college, parents will forward relevant documentation to the SEN Coordinators, as requested in the letter offering a place. This is in line with the Admissions Policy of St. Declan's College.
- The SEN Coordinator and/or Principal will meet with parents in order to ensure that adequate resources can be accessed for that student.
- It is to be understood that the ability of the school to respond to the educational needs of any student applying for admission is dependent on the Department of Education and Skills supplying the appropriate facilities and resources to allow the college to answer that need. It may therefore be necessary for the Board of Management to defer enrolment of a student.

(ii) Screening of First Year Students:

- All 1st year students are screened using standardised screening tests in literacy and numeracy – CAT 4 and NGRT.
- Students who are achieving below the 10th percentile in literacy and numeracy may be selected for further diagnostic assessments
- If considered appropriate, these students' parents will be offered the opportunity for their child to avail of support
- Further referrals may be made to outside agencies e.g. the NCSE, HSE, privately, NEPS in consultation with parents and the SENO, where it is deemed appropriate by the SEN Core Team/ Coordinators or Principal.

(iii) Students with SEN who transfer from another post-primary school:



Students with SEN who transfer from another post-primary school are expected to present with their educational passport and ensure that information is passed to the SEN Team. These students will be assessed according to the criteria used for assessing 1st year students and will have the appropriate resources made available to them.

(iv) On-going assessment of students:

- From time to time, it can emerge that a student who was not previously identified as having individual needs and learning differences is experiencing barriers to learning. For students who continue to cause concern, referral to the SEN Team may be appropriate.
- If the SEN Team decides that a student would benefit from further intervention they will assess the student informally. Parents are informed and their consent is sought prior to any assessment taking place. The outcome of this assessment and college resources will determine what course of action is taken.
- The results of the assessment may indicate that a student does not have a learning difficulty. In this case the student's needs are supported through the structures available to all students, such as mentoring/monitoring by Year Head, support from the Guidance Counsellor, review of entry levels for State Examinations.
- If the results of the assessment show that the student has emotional/social difficulties a decision may be made to the parents for a referral to a relevant outside agency.
- In its operations, the College shall be guided by the New Model of Allocation (DES)
https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0014_2017.pdf ,
the DES Guidelines
<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/Guidelines-for-Post-Primary-Schools-Supporting-Students-with-Special-Educational-Needs-in-Mainstream-Schools.pdf> ,
and the National Education Psychological Services (NEPS)
https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_post_primary_continuum_resource_pack.pdf
for establishing a continuum of assessment and support.

6. Allocation of Resources and Teaching of Students with SEN

NCSE resources in St. Declan's College will be directed towards the student with the greatest need and in accordance with the model of allocation for resource hours.

The SEN Team will interpret the outcome of assessments and consider the most appropriate form of intervention for the student, in consultation with parents, subject teachers, SNAs and relevant outside agencies.



St. Declan's College aspires to educate students with SEN in an inclusive setting within the mainstream tutor group and year group supported by an SNA, where appropriate. This may take the form of co-teaching in particular subjects. It may also take the form of small class groups. One-to-one classes may occur if other students of similar needs are not available at that time in the day.

If withdrawal of students with SEN from mainstream classes for supplementary or support teaching is deemed necessary, parents' permission will be sought.

7. Models of Provision of Support

We aim to provide a model of responsible inclusion that best meets the needs of the individual student, in line with the New Model of Allocation and Guidelines (DES).

As an inclusive college, support for achieving learning outcomes or intentions in the mainstream class group is a useful method of provision. Co-Teaching – where students with additional educational needs and all students are supported in the mainstream classroom when an additional teacher teaches in cooperation with the subject teacher.

Small group classes are arranged on the basis of similar need profiles and the capacity to withdraw students at the same time. The organisation of these groupings is the responsibility of the relevant Core Team member and overseen by the SEN Coordinators and the Principal. Withdrawal for small groups usually occurs at times when the students have official exemptions from subjects. This is not always possible due to timetabling constraints.

Individual support classes are used only where a student requires specialised individual support.

Literacy and numeracy, curricular and organisational, emotional, and social skills, and technology support is given during individual and small groups where appropriate.

An alternative timetable may also be arranged for a small number of students for whom it is deemed necessary, after consultation with the psychologist, parents and teachers. These students have their timetable reduced because they cannot sustain a full curriculum.

Placement in the ASD class is based on clear recommendation in the student's psychological report and there being availability in the class. (see Admissions Policy for detailed information).

8. Approaches to Learning in the SEN Team

The SEN Team will provide a variety of experiences/activities during a course of study and during a lesson. Teachers will identify the learning style of the individual and use suitable methodologies to appeal to the kinaesthetic, auditory, sensory, linguistic, visual and interpersonal intelligences. There are opportunities for individual and group



activities. SETs offer student choice and understanding in their learning and seek to develop students' understanding of their own learning.

Lessons are conducted in a secure, supportive and disciplined manner. The students and the staff interact in a manner that demonstrates mutual respect. Our school believes that learning takes place most effectively in the context of a caring relationship and that a good teacher/student rapport fosters trust and promotes self-reliance and initiative in the student.

Some of the programmes offered include:-

- Typing Skills
- Literacy and Numeracy Programmes
- Social Skills
 - Exam/ Study Skills
- Independence Programmes
- Behaviour Support (BFL)
- Restorative Time

9. Administrative Issues in the SEN Team

9.1 Reasonable Accommodations

The SEN Team will liaise with the State Examinations Commission (SEC) to secure and facilitate reasonable accommodations for eligible students with individual needs and learning differences during State Examinations. Eligibility is based on the criteria set out by the SEC. <https://www.examinations.ie/schools/IR-1004-57457486.pdf> Application dates and guidelines are given to schools each academic year by the SEC. Parental permission is always sought at this stage.

Students with individual needs and learning differences sit house exams in accordance with the school procedures. Within resource constraints, students who have officially been awarded RACE for State Examinations will have the benefit of the same in school examinations.

9.2 Equipment

The SEN Team will liaise with the Department of Education and Skills and the NCSE to secure and facilitate personal equipment (such as laptop computers, mobile devices, notebooks, voice recognition software) for eligible students with individual needs and learning differences.

10. Code of Behaviour

All students in St. Declan's College are expected to adhere to the College's Code of Behaviour. However, it is accepted that for some students extra layers of support/interventions will be needed while implementing sanctions according to the



Code of Behaviour. This does not remove sanctions but adjusts the sanctions to meet the individual situation if appropriate. It is accepted that if the ladder of interventions does not change the student's behaviour, students will face appropriate sanctions. (See Code of Behaviour for detailed information)

11. Relationship with other School Policies

The Inclusion Policy adheres to the terms of all other policies in St. Declan's College.