

Support Teaching and Special Needs Policy



St Benignus NS, Balscadden

1.0 Introduction

All pupils have needs including the need to feel a sense of belonging, the need to feel safe, the need to communicate and to be communicated with and the need to be respected and valued. In meeting these needs St Benignus NS view their pupils as learning not only within their classroom setting but also within the context of the ethos and culture of the school. The model of assessment and intervention outlined in this policy is underpinned by the recognition that special educational needs occur along a continuum from mild to severe and from transient to long term.

2.0 How the policy was developed?

The staff of St Benignus NS feel that ensuring that as many pupils as possible can benefit from mainstream class instruction is a priority. To that end, the school embarked on a process of self-evaluation to ensure that those pupils with the most need receive the most support. The staff of the school completed a SCOT analysis on Support Teaching in the school. Questionnaires were then issued to the parents of pupils attending Support Teaching. The results of these questionnaires were collated and analysed. The responses from the questionnaires and the SCOT analysis formed the basis of the review. The review was further informed by suggestions made by a sub-committee of parents whose children were attending Support Teaching at the draft stage. Documents which were consulted in the review of this policy include: Learning Support Guidelines, Special Educational Needs: A continuum of support, Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties: A continuum of support and Special Education Circular 02/05.

3.0 The policy's relationship to the school's mission statement and ethos

St Benignus NS aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and other people. We endeavour to equip each pupil with the skills and positive self-esteem to empower them to contribute to their community and become lifelong learners.

We believe that putting structures in place to ensure that all pupils experience success in the school on a daily basis is of paramount importance. We are dedicated to helping each pupil achieve his/her potential. The provision of a quality system of Support Teaching is integral to this commitment.

4.0 Aims of Support Teaching

- Facilitate pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level.
- Provide pupils with a continuum of support in line with a continuum of need.
- Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning.
- Enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners within their own ability.
- Involve parents in supporting their children's learning.
- Promote collaboration among teachers.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities in Support Teaching Provision

St Benignus NS adopts the roles and responsibilities as set out in the Learning Support Guidelines (2000).

- Principal: The principal teacher has overall responsibility for the Support Teaching programme and for the operation of services for children with special educational needs.
- Classroom teacher: The class teacher has first line responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class including those selected for supplementary teaching.
- Support Teacher: Collaboration and consultation with principal teacher, class teacher, parents and other professionals as well as the delivery of supplementary teaching to pupils both in-class and on a withdrawal basis.
- Parents: Collaborating and sharing information between teachers and parents will be of critical importance to the success of children receiving supplementary teaching.
- Pupils: Planning and monitoring their learning.

6.0 Strategies for co-ordinating Support Teaching and Special Needs services

- The principal teacher, classroom teacher and Support teachers will work as a team to ensure that all children receive support contingent upon their needs. They will also collaborate in the preparation of applications to the Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO).
- Each child availing of supplementary teaching at Stage 2 or 3 will be designated a Support Teaching team. A Support Teaching team may comprise the principal teacher, class teacher, support teacher, special needs assistant (SNA) and any other specialist personnel linked with the ongoing support of the pupil.

- The Support teacher will give a copy of their Cuntas Míósúil to the relevant class teacher as a means of further supporting good communication between class teachers and Support teachers. The format of the Cuntas Míósúil could mirror the Support teacher's Weekly Planning notes.

7.0 Strategies for preventing learning difficulties

Learning difficulties can be prevented or at least alleviated by implementing appropriate whole school programmes in English, mathematics and behaviour management. To this end the school have devised strategies as part of the English part of the Plean Scoile and the School Improvement Plan (Eureka Maths and Eureka English). Examples of these strategies include:

- The Jolly Phonics programme is taught in classes Junior Infants to Second Class.
- The Oxford Reading Tree programme is followed in Junior Classes. In addition, Sunny Street readers are also used.
- Discrete time is devoted to Oral Language Development in all classes.
- Reading Comprehension Strategies are taught to classes Third to Sixth.
- Graded readers are used in classes Third to Sixth to reflect a range of reading attainment levels and genres.
- Eureka Maths will target children experiencing difficulties in maths through small group in-class intervention with a combination of support from class and Support teachers.
- A variety of assessment techniques are used by the classroom teachers in line with the school Assessment Policy to monitor and support the learning of all pupils.
- Our SPHE Policy aims to teach behaviour management strategies to children.

8.0 Whole school strategies for implementing early intervention programmes

We are committed to the principle of early intervention as a key aspect of our Support Teaching approach. To that end:

- Language programmes will begin in Junior Infants with the support of Support teachers when children are identified with language issues.
- Pupils will be tested using the Belfield test to identify strengths and areas of concern in Junior Infants.
- Pupils will be re-tested using the MIST test to further identify learning needs in Senior Infants.
- Eureka Maths and Eureka English begin in Junior Infants to target areas of number from the first term of school.
- The use of Behavioural checklists to identify a profile of behaviour.

9.0 Whole school procedures and criteria for identifying and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching

The procedures for identifying and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching will include:

- Administration, scoring and interpretation of an appropriate standardised screening measure by the class teacher. The test will depend on the age and class of the child. Junior Infants: Belfield; Senior Infants: MIST; 1st- 6th : Drumcondra Reading/MICRA-T, Drumcondra Maths/SIGMA-T and Drumcondra Spelling. 1st, 3rd and 5th : NRIT; 2nd Class: NVRT. A Dyslexia Screening Test may also be used where appropriate.
- The use of a variety of assessment techniques by class teachers as detailed in the Assessment Policy.
- Selection of pupils for diagnostic assessment by the Support Teacher is made using the above assessment information in consultation with the class teacher and parents. Administration of diagnostic tests by the Support Teacher to each selected pupil to identify the pupil's learning strengths and needs. The following diagnostic tests may be administered on children selected for supplementary teaching: PAT dictation exercises, Jackson Phonic Tests, Neale Analysis of Reading Ability, RAIN Sentence Test, Daniels and Diack Reading Comprehension Tests Level 1&2, Schonell Spelling Tests, Young's diagnostic tests.
- Determination of the nature of the intervention, i.e. Stage 1 (Classroom Support); Stage 2 (School Support); Stage 3 (School Support Plus). See Table 1.
- Identification of learning targets and the development of an appropriate plan: Stage 1 (Classroom Support Plan); Stage 2 (School Support Plan); Stage 3 (IEP/School Support Plus Plan). All planning will take place using a consultative approach among class teacher, Support Teacher and parents/guardians.
- One group will be put together from one class 2nd-6th each term for children with Exceptional Academic Ability (EAA). The children will work with a Support Teacher on high interest activities that challenge their learning.

Table 1

Level of support	Type of support	Type of plan
Stage 1	Classroom support	Classroom support plan
Stage 2	School Support	School Support plan
Stage 3	School Support Plus	Individual Education Plan (IEP)/School Support Plus plan

10.0 Whole school procedures and criteria for identifying and selecting pupils for specialist diagnostician assessments and follow-up procedures

Following screening and diagnostic assessments, decisions will be made regarding whether a pupil should be referred for a further specialist diagnostician assessment such as a

psychological report. Other examples include an Occupational Therapist Report or a Speech and Language Report. The Principal, class teacher and Support Teacher will collaborate to make recommendations previous to school visits by specialists such as psychologists. Parents will be consulted during this process. The advice of the specialist diagnostician will be a major determining factor. Other factors include:

- The likelihood that the assessment will lead to diagnostic information which might inform the development of a specialist teaching programme.
- The likelihood of the assessment leading to an allocation for complex needs.
- The likelihood of the assessment leading to the allocation of a Special Needs Assistant (SNA).
- The severity of the learning or behavioural needs of the pupil. This will be measured using the assessment techniques described in this policy.
- The likelihood of the assessment leading to a diagnosis of a Specific Learning Disability such as Dyslexia.

Due to the limited access we have to our NEPS psychologist, assessments are unlikely to be recommended for pupils whose needs can be catered for within the General Allocation Model and where an assessment is unlikely to lead to further diagnostic information that might influence the nature of the supplementary teaching of the pupil.

PLEASE NOTE: The Principal, Support Teacher or class teacher may from time to time, as appropriate on occasion, avail of an unnamed consultation with the school's NEPS psychologist. During such a consultation no identifier information will be given to the psychologist. All advice received from the psychologist will be a global nature.

10.1 The following procedures will take place to support parents whose child has just received a psychologist's/specialist report:

- If the school receives the report the original will be passed on to the parents/guardians.
- Shortly after that, giving enough time to parents/guardians, a meeting will take place with members of the Support Teaching team assigned to the child. This may include the psychologist.
- The purpose of the meeting will be to explain the results of the report and to put an appropriate plan in place for the child in terms of providing extra support if applicable.
- Parents will also be given a pack with contact details of supportive agencies applicable to the conclusions of the report, e.g. Dyslexia Association of Ireland, Dyspraxia Association, ADHD Support Group etc.

10.2 Gaeilge Exemptions

A Gaeilge exemption will be granted by the school Principal according to the terms of Circular 12/96 as allowed by the Minister for Education and skills.

11.0 Models of Support

Pupils will receive support teaching under a number of models of support. The model of support is agreed between support teachers, class teachers and parents.

11.1 One to one teaching (withdrawal)

Pupils are withdrawn from their class to be given individual support. In order to satisfy Child Safeguarding Procedures, there shall be glass in the door of the room and/or the door of the room shall be left open. There shall also be a window in the room.

11.2 Small group teaching (withdrawal)

Pupils are withdrawn from their class in a small group to be given specialised support.

11.3 Individual and/or small group in-class support

Pupils receive support individually or in a small group from a support teacher in their own classroom. This may be in the context of team teaching.

12.0 Whole school procedures for continuing/discontinuing pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching

Consultation will take place at the end of each instructional term for pupils who are receiving support at Stage 2 & 3. A determination will be made at the end of each instructional term on the level of support that should be in place for the next instructional term. Consultation will occur between class teacher, Support Teacher and parent/guardian. All changes will be communicated to the Principal.

13.0 Whole school approaches to involving and communicating with parents

- Parental consent will be sought to carry out diagnostic testing.
- Further parental consent will be sought in order for pupils to receive supplementary teaching on a withdrawal basis.
- A letter will be sent to the parents/guardians of each child receiving support at Stage 2 or 3 at the beginning of every school year. This letter will name the child's Support Teaching team.

- Parents and guardians of pupils at Stage 2 will be invited to attend a meeting at the end of each instructional term to review their child's progress and to receive tips about how best to support their child's learning. A handout will be given to parents/guardians which will outline some of these ideas. Parents are encouraged to contact the Support Teacher if any difficulties arise during the instructional term.
- Parents and guardians of pupils at Stage 3 will be invited to attend an IEP (Individual Education Plan) meeting 3 times during the year. A consultative approach will be taken where school and home will work together. Parents/Guardians will receive a copy of the IEP.
- A page will be provided on the school website with information on Support Teaching. A copy of the Support Teaching and Special Needs policy will appear on the Policy page of the school website.
- A separate group will be set up on the Textaparent service for parents of children receiving Support Teaching.
- Parents will receive a written report, as part of the Annual Report Card, from their child's Support Teacher in June every year.

14.0 Whole school procedures for record keeping in relation to Support Teaching

A file shall be created for each pupil who enters Stage 2 School Support in Support Teaching. This file will contain the appropriate past and present School Support Plans and/or Individual Education Plans (IEP). This file shall have a cover sheet which records correspondence regarding outside agencies and any other correspondence not recorded in the plans. It may also include assessments, activities and reviews that the pupil and parent/guardian undertake with the Support Teacher. The file shall be stored in the Support Teaching Room. This file can be accessed by the class teacher. Record of pupils who receive support at Stage 1 Classroom Support will be kept in class teacher's assessment profile and recorded on the Class Assessment Profile.

15.0 Whole school approaches to grouping and timetabling for supplementary teaching

Support Teaching intervention will use a variety of grouping techniques according to the needs of the child. Pupils will be supported on a withdrawal basis and also in-class. Withdrawal type intervention may include one-on-one support and/or small group work. Groups are comprised of pupils who require similar intervention according to their learning needs.

Timetabling will be co-ordinated by the Support Teachers in collaboration with class teachers in advance of a new instructional term. Every effort will be made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on core subjects and that in as much as possible that the same curricular area is not missed out on each time, particularly areas perceived by pupils as enjoyable such as PE, IT or art. Supplementary teaching may occur in class during the teaching of core subjects.

16.0 Whole school policy on the work schedule of the Support Teacher

The work of the Support Teacher entails providing as many supplementary teaching lessons as possible. However, in addition to providing supplementary teaching the Support Teacher will require time for a variety of other activities that will support learning in the school and support positive parental relations. To this end one hour every Friday (1.40-2.40) will be devoted to planning, Support Teaching Team meetings and meetings with parents etc.

17.0 List of Appendices

Appendix 1: List of recommended psychologists/OTs/Speech and Language therapists for use in private assessments

Appendix 2: Contact details of professionals contacted by Support Teaching eg HSE staff, NEPS.

Appendix 3: Programmes used in Support Teaching, i.e. Phonological Awareness/Speech and Language

Appendix 4: Sample Classroom Support Plan

Appendix 5: Sample School Support Plan

Appendix 5A: Sample School Support Review Record

Appendix 6: Sample School Support Plus Plan/Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Appendix 7: Sample Support Teaching File Cover Sheet

Appendix 8: Parental/Guardian consent form for diagnostic testing

Appendix 9: Parental/Guardian consent form for supplementary teaching

Appendix 10: Agreement to discontinue supplementary teaching

Appendix 11: Letter to parents at the beginning of the school year

Appendix 12: English as an Additional Language (EAL) Policy

18.0 Evaluation and Review

The success of this Support Teaching and Special Needs Policy will be assessed as follows:

- Achievement of pupils receiving supplementary teaching at annual standardised tests.
- Mobility of pupils from Support Teaching back to mainstream instruction only.
- Enhanced parental involvement in pupils' learning.
- Positive attitude of pupils towards Support Teaching.

- Effective communication between class teachers and Support teachers

Reviewed September 2008

Reviewed 28/1/2013

Reviewed 24/11/2014

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ (date)

Signed: _____

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: _____

Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____