

St. Patrick's SNS Special Needs and Learning Support Policy

This policy was devised with the cooperation of the principal, Special Education Teaching Team and members of staff and it was last updated in March 2022.

1. Context

St. Patrick's S.N.S. is a senior mixed primary school situated in the parish of Corduff. The school has disadvantaged status and falls into DEIS Band 1. The school population includes children from the travelling community and a high number of children from the international community.

2. Beliefs and Principles

St. Patrick's S.N.S. is a co-educational, Catholic Primary School which strives to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed. We strive to provide for the holistic development of the child in a positive, secure environment.

3. Rationale

This policy is necessary to keep St. Patrick's S.N.S. up to date and in line with current trends in Special Education and to help us with the following:

- Complying with current legislation and department circulars.
- Reviewing our existing policy.

4. Aims for Learning Support and Special Needs Education

The principal aim of all learning support is to optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable all pupils with special educational needs to experience success at school and where possible to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school. The school will aim:

- a) To identify children experiencing learning difficulties and to put in place appropriate learning support for these children.
- b) To adapt the curriculum where necessary to meet the needs of children experiencing learning difficulties.
- c) To develop the self esteem of each child.
- d) To work closely with parents/guardians as partners in their child's education.
- e) To enable pupils attending Learning Support/Resource/Special Class to participate as much as possible in the full curriculum for their class level.

- f) To provide supplementary teaching and additional support and resources with a priority for the areas of English and Mathematics for those pupils identified as needing support.
- g) To establish early intervention programmes e.g., Toe by Toe, SNIP, paired reading , First Steps, Station Maths Teaching designed to enhance learning and to prevent/reduce difficulties in learning.
- h) To enable collaboration among teachers in the implementation of the whole school policies on Learning Support for these pupils.
- i) To establish communication for the involvement of professionals and others with expertise in the area of Special Needs.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management

The board has responsibility to oversee the implementation of the school policy on Learning Support and Special Needs.

Principal

The principal has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school policy on Learning Support and Special Needs.

Class Teacher – Classroom Support Level

- a) Primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her classroom, including those selected for supplementary learning support/resource teaching/special class.
- b) In consultation with the Special Education Teacher, devising and implementing Student Support Plans for those attending learning support.

Special Education Teaching Team/Special Education Teacher – School Support Level

The Learning Support Teacher has responsibility for:

- a) Coordinating whole school screening and testing in order to identify children who should receive Learning Support.
- b) Further testing (standardised, criterion based and diagnostic) of children who have been identified as needing Learning Support.
- c) Devising and implementing learning plans for those attending learning support in consultation with the class teacher.
- d) Monitoring and recording progress of pupils attending learning support.
- e) Recommending to classroom teachers suitable approaches and materials for children attending learning support.

- f) Consult with the parents of pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching (through the HSCL teacher if necessary) to identify ways in which parents can support the attainment of learning targets in their child's Student Support File and provide a copy of the SSF to the parents.
- g) Encourage parents to participate in programmes organised by the HSCL teacher that enhance learning at home and in school.

Only pupils who have been appropriately assessed and who meet the relevant criteria for a diagnosis of a learning difficulty under one or more of the disabilities outlined in Department Circular 0802 may receive provision from the Special Needs/Resource Teacher.

The Resource Teacher - School Support Plus Level

1. Liaising with parent(s) / guardians, class teacher(s), students, other relevant professionals such as psychologists, speech therapists, visiting teachers, special schools in order to:
 - a) Identify the child's strengths and needs.
 - b) Prioritise needs.
 - c) Select priority needs for Student Support PPlan
 - d) Determine current performance level (base line)*.
 - e) Devise Student Support Plan. specifying long term goals, objectives, teaching methods/strategies, materials/equipment and monitoring procedures.
 - f) Liaise with class teachers with regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, suitable textbooks, use of ICT and suitable software and a range of other related matters.
 - g) Teach and review Student Support Plan.

*Baseline level plus direction of Student Support Plan ascertained through diagnostic testing in September and an appropriate time later in that academic year (depending on the test). Support Plan reviewed in February/March.

5. Identification and Selection of Pupils for Supplementary Teaching

The school currently administers the Drumcondra Reading and Mathematics Tests towards the end of the school year for children in 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th. New admissions after September will be tested shortly after arrival if scores cannot be gained from previous schools. Priority for receiving supplementary teaching will be given to children who score a percentile less than 10 in the Drumcondra test. These guidelines in test results are flexible

and the professional judgement of classroom teachers will be a crucial part of the selection process.

The learning support teacher **may** then administer one or more of the following tests to these children:

Mathematics:

1. Westwood One Minute Basic Number Facts Tests
2. Drumcondra
3. Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT 4) Math Computation subtest; part 1: Oral Computation, part 2: Math Computation

English:

1. Drumcondra
2. NVRT
3. Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)
4. YARK Assessment for Reading Comprehension
5. WRAT 4 subtests:
 - Word Reading
 - Sentence Comprehension
 - Spelling

When selecting children to attend Learning Support, the following criteria will be applied.

- a) Pupils may attend for both English and Maths when required.
- b) The order of learning priority when selecting pupils will be as follows:
< 10th percentile for literacy and numeracy
- c) The emphasis will be on early intervention in 3rd and 4th classes, as studies have shown that early intervention is more effective than later intervention.
- d) The optimum group size is 3-4 when possible. Where a pupil does not make satisfactory progress in a small group setting, consideration may be given to providing individual teaching.

6. Procedures for early identification/screening/referral of special needs pupils from within the school

- Teacher observation will play a major part in identifying children who may require special needs input.
- Standardised testing from 3rd to 6th: Drumcondra and (NVRT for 3rd).

- Communication with parents is an essential part of this process. Parents will be kept informed and consulted with regard to any concerns the school may have. The HSCL teacher often visits parents in this regard if required.
- Depending on the outcome of teacher observation and testing, it may be considered appropriate to refer the child for a psychological assessment by an educational psychologist. Again this decision will be a collaborative effort between parents and school.
- The school maintains communication with the NEPS psychologists throughout the school year. Throughout the year, the psychologist visits the school on a number of days to carry out pre-arranged assessments, reviews or observations of children who are giving cause for concern.

7. Provision of supplementary teaching

Following further analysis of learning needs and difficulties, children are grouped according to their needs. Supplementary teaching will then be provided in English and Maths. Children may be withdrawn from their class in timetabled groups for learning support lessons or may be taught within the classroom alternatively.

8. Continuing/Discontinuing supplementary teaching

Children selected for supplementary teaching will attend for an instructional period lasting a minimum of 12 weeks. At the end of this period progress will be reviewed with the class teacher and SET Team. Supplementary Teaching will then be withdrawn or continued as appropriate. Parents shall be informed of the review and the course of action to be taken.

9. Record Keeping/Monitoring Progress

Every child receiving Support has a folder (can be paper or on the drive). The Special Education Teacher will compile an individual profile of each child containing test results, reading records and progress of each child in receipt of support, a Student Support File for all. Psychological reports will be securely stored.

10. Liaising with parents/links with outside agencies

The Principal/Special Education Teacher will communicate regularly with parents regarding the selection and progress of children attending Support.

The Special Education Teacher & Classroom Teacher will have responsibility for (with parental consent), communication with outside agencies and co-ordinating pupil support services e.g. psychological assessments, speech therapy and child and family services.

11. Pupils may receive an exemption from the study of Irish according to circular 0054/2022 if:

- **they have moved from a different country without previous experience of learning the Irish language and** who is not less than 12 years of age on the day of their enrolment¹ or re-enrolment or who is enrolling following the completion of the full course of primary education recognised by another state.
- they present with significant literacy difficulties that are persistent despite having had access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy learning in all subjects/across the curriculum and over time **AND** who, at the time of the application for exemption presents with a standardised score on a discrete test in either Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling at/below the 10th percentile. Normally, pupils availing of an exemption under this category should be encouraged to engage with the study of oral Irish language for as long as possible in keeping with the integrated approach in the *Primary Language Curriculum* and acknowledging that pupils at a young age adapt and improve over time.
- **A pupil who experiences a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a significant barrier to the pupil's participation and engagement in their learning and school life**
- It is recognised that there is a small cohort of pupils who have a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a significant barrier to their participation and engagement in their learning and school life. In the case of these pupils, consideration may need to be given to adjusting the range of learning experiences to ensure that their needs are met and that they may engage purposefully in their learning in school. In very exceptional circumstances, this means that consideration may need to be given to exempting them from the study of Irish.

An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to a pupil:

- **they** have at least reached second class
AND
- **they** experience a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a very significant and continuing barrier to his/her participation and engagement in his/her learning and school life
AND
- **(iii)** whose school has substantial written evidence that these needs persist despite targeted and individualised Student Support Plans to address those needs
AND
- **(iv)** whose school has substantial written evidence that these individualised Student Support Plans have been implemented over not less than two school years, and have been monitored and reviewed by the school in collaboration with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the pupil
AND
- **(v)** who has been given every reasonable opportunity to participate in the learning of Irish in mainstream classes for as long as possible in keeping with the integrated approach in the *Primary Language Curriculum* and acknowledging that pupils at a young age adapt and improve over time
AND
- **(vi)** the principal is satisfied that the granting of an exemption is in the overall best interests of the pupil concerned.

¹ For the purposes of this Circular where pupils enrol in the final 2 months of an academic year, their enrolment/re-enrolment will be considered to take place on the first day of the following academic year.

- Normally, this will mean that the pupil will be expected to engage with the study of Irish at least to the end of fifth class. However, in very exceptional circumstances, where the principal is satisfied that an exemption is warranted to address the high level of multiple and persistent needs of the pupil, and certifies that all of the conditions in (i) to (vi) above have been met, it may be granted at an earlier stage, but in no case may this be earlier than second class.
- **A pupil in a recognised² special school or class or who was previously enrolled in a recognised special school or class or who has a recommendation³ and has been deemed eligible⁴ for a place in a recognised special school and/or in a special class in a mainstream school**
- (i) Where a pupil is currently enrolled in a recognised special school or special class in a mainstream school or who has previously been enrolled in a recognised special school or special class in a mainstream school and who is transitioning to mainstream provision, that pupil is automatically entitled to an exemption from the study of Irish without an application.
OR
- (ii) Where a pupil has a recommendation and has been deemed eligible for a place in a recognised special school and/or in a special class in a mainstream school an application for an exemption from the study of Irish will be required.
- Normally, pupils availing of an exemption under (i) **OR** (ii) of this category should be encouraged to engage with the study of oral Irish language for as long as possible in keeping with the integrated approach in the *Primary Language Curriculum* and acknowledging that pupils at a young age adapt and improve over time.
- **A pupil whose parent(s)/guardian(s) is a/are diplomatic or consular representative(s) of another country to Ireland irrespective of age or educational history**
- An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted to a pupil whose parent(s)/guardian(s) is a/are diplomatic or consular representative(s) of another country to Ireland irrespective of age or educational history.

² A recognised special school/class is a primary or post-primary level class sanctioned and resourced by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). See <https://ncse.ie/> for a list of such schools/classes

³ The recommendation for the pupil to be placed in a special school or special class meets the specifications for such placement as determined by the NCSE and the pupil has been deemed eligible and/or is awaiting the recommended placement.

⁴ See Exemptions from the Study of Irish: Guidelines for Primary Schools (English-medium), DE (2022).

11. Monitoring and Reviews of Policy

The implementation of the policy will be constantly monitored and will be reviewed every year.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Patrick's S.N.S. at its meeting on _____. Parents may view this policy on the school website or by appointment with the Principal.

Date: _____

Chairperson of the Board of Management