



# **Scoil Maelruain Senior Additional Needs Policy (2024)**

## **Introductory Statement**

Scoil Maelruain Senior caters for 389 pupils. It is a senior school for boys and girls from third to sixth class. There are 16 mainstream class teachers, a Special Education Team (SET) of 7.75 support teachers and 7 SNA's.

The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other interested parties on the provision of support to pupils with additional needs. It will assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child in our school. This mission statement is subject to resources being made available by the D.E.S

In this policy statement all references to parent[s] include guardian[s].

## **Mission Statement**

Scoil Maelruain Senior hopes to serve all the children in our community without prejudice and we welcome all children. We will endeavour to develop each child's natural potential at his/her own rate and to his/her fullest capacity.

## **Aims:**

- To outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to pupils with additional needs.
- To outline our whole school approach to assessments and teaching in relation to pupils with additional needs.

- To enable pupils with additional needs to have as complete an educational experience as possible.
- To establish communication structures for the involvement of pupils with additional needs.
- To outline what inclusion means to our school.

## **Inclusion**

Inclusion is based on the philosophy that children with special education needs receive their education needs in the least restrictive environment possible [Autism Task Force 2001]. Inclusion means the school accommodates the needs of the child and endeavours to meet the learning and care needs of all students. Children with additional needs will strive to live with others in society and lead lives that are as independent as possible.

The challenge of inclusion is to find the best way of accommodating the child's unique learning style in order to facilitate the student's access to the entire curriculum. Flexibility and creativity are required. Scoil Maelruain Senior favours inclusion. To this end

- All students and staff are valued equally.
- When the need arises, practices in the school will be restructured so that we respond to the diversity of all students.
- Barriers to learning and participation for all students will be reduced.
- The right of students to an education in their locality is acknowledged.
- It is recognised that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.

The staff of Scoil Maelruain aims to provide an optimum learning environment for all pupils.

## **To enhance learning for all students:**

- Teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind.
- Lessons encourage the participation of all students.

- Students are actively involved in their own learning and their voices valued.
- Students learn collaboratively.
- Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect.
- Teachers plan, teach and review in partnership with other teachers and parents.

**Scoil Maelruain strives to provide a safe and comfortable environment for all pupils.**

**To this end we endeavour to:**

- Ensure safe access to all areas of the classroom and school for all students.
- Ensure an appropriate learning environment.
- Enforce a strict anti-bullying policy.

### **Identification, Screening and Referral Procedures**

Drumcondra reading, Drumcondra maths and Drumcondra spelling tests are administered to all classes in May.

The New Non Reading Intelligence Test a [NNRIT] is administered to third classes in February of each year. These results are tabulated against the Drumcondra maths and Drumcondra reading results to gauge whether each child is achieving his/her full potential. Where concerns arise additional tests may be administered.

In line with the new model for the allocation of resources to schools, which came into effect in September 2017, we follow the staged approach to intervention in Scoil Maelruain Senior.

This approach follows the continuum of support model recommended by NEPS.

#### Stage 1 Classroom Support:

Where a teacher or parent has concerns about a child an intervention process coordinated by the classroom teacher and carried out within the regular classroom will be initiated and the support file opened. The teacher will consult with the Special Education Team (SET) and parents at this stage. After a period not

exceeding eight weeks the student support file will be reviewed. A decision will then be made to proceed to stage 2 or close the file.

### **Stage 2 : School Support**

In some cases interventions at classroom support level are not enough to fully meet the pupils' additional needs. School Support may, therefore, be required. The class teacher needs to involve the learning support/resource teachers in the process at this point and it involves more systematic gathering of information and the development and monitoring of a School Support Plan with parental consent. Interventions at this stage will be additional to those provided through classroom support and will include learning support.

### **Stage 3: School Support Plus**

**School Support Plus** is generally characterised by the school requesting the involvement of relevant external services in more detailed assessment and development of intervention programmes, however external assessments are not a requirement to access this level of support. This level of intervention is for children with complex and/or enduring needs and whose challenges are ongoing despite carefully planned interventions at the previous stages.

The student support plan will continue to be amended and adapted to individuals' needs. This process will commence in October and will be reviewed in February and June each year.

## **Implementing a Continuum of Support for Pupils with Additional Educational Needs**

### **A Three – Step Process**

#### **Identification of need**

- Use the Continuum of Support problem-solving process to identify and respond to academic, social and emotional and care needs
- Gather and analyse data from observation, interview, curriculum-based assessment, screening and diagnostic assessment, as well as from professional reports, as appropriate
- Consult with parents and pupils and with relevant external professionals as appropriate
- Use the Student Support File to record the identification and assessment of needs, intervention supports and review of progress

### **Meeting the students needs**

- Plan, implement and review early-intervention approaches to develop academic, social and emotional skills.
- Class teacher, special education teacher, parents and pupils collaborate to set specific time-bound targets
- Carefully match interventions to identified need
- Continue to promote effective teaching approaches, including differentiation of content and activities to ensure that all pupils are engaged purposefully in meaningful learning activities

### **Monitoring and Reviewing Outcomes**

- Using baseline information, review and record progress and plan for next step in pupils' learning
- Maintain support plans that are clear, useful and easy to interpret and share
- Review outcomes

### **Organisation of the Special Education Team**

- The role of the S.E.T teacher is to provide support to children who have reached stage 2 or higher on the continuum of support and to provide advice and support to classroom teachers of students on stage 1.
- One to one teaching may be provided
- Group teaching may be provided if this system is envisaged to be of benefit to the child/children.

- A system of withdrawal and/or in class support will operate in response to the needs of the individual pupils. Collaboration with the class teacher is essential and together they will decide on a system where the child can have genuine access to the mainstream curriculum.
- In consultation with the parents and others interested parties, the class teacher and SET teacher/s will individually plan for the child. S.E.T will liaise and consult with teachers/parents when planning how best to address individual needs.
- The child's progress will be discussed with teachers/parents and the necessary adjustments made to the plans and log of actions

### **Timetabling for Support Teaching**

- In conjunction with the class teachers the SET teachers will draw up a timetable for children with additional needs.
- If the child is withdrawn from the class, a flexible approach to timetabling is adopted by the class teacher so the child does not miss out on the same curricular subject each day.
- A time is agreed that is suitable for both parties.
- A decision is made as to when consultation and planning takes place.
- Timetables and support will be reviewed regularly. In line with the Continuum of support, individuals/children may after a short period of intervention move back into the mainstream class setting.

### **Collaboration with Special Needs Assistants[SNA]**

- SNA's are allocated to schools as a schools based resource and not to individual children. The deployment of SNAs within a school is a matter for the Principal/ Board of Management.
- The class teacher, S.E.T teacher and SNA will plan for the individual needs of the child.
- The SNA will be given clear instructions on his/her role.

- The SNA, SET teacher and class teacher will collaborate to create a Pupil Care Plan.
- The SNA will be involved in tracking progress and observation of the child.
- Clear directions will be given to the SNA but there will be room for the SNA to take initiative where appropriate.

### **The Role of the Class Teacher**

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class including those with additional needs. Where possible the class teacher should:

- Implement teaching programmes that optimise the learning of all pupils.
- Administer and score standardised tests
- Differentiate as appropriate
- When concerned about a pupil's progress initiate stage 1 of support
- Collaborate with S.E.T team as needed in line with Continuum of Support [2017]
- Collaborate with S.E.T team and S.N.A to create a Pupil Care Plan

### **The Role of the Special Education/Support Teacher**

Special education teachers should be familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for a particular learning style and to meet a variety of needs. Teaching approaches will include a combination of in- class support, co-operative teaching, early intervention and small group or individual support.

Some students with more complex and enduring needs may require specific methodologies, teaching approaches and/or learning activities. Such interventions should be based on careful identification of strengths and needs, including multi-disciplinary assessment when necessary.

The type of support offered depends on the child's individual needs and takes the form of:

- curriculum support
- life and/or social skills training
- physical training/gross motor development
- communication and/or language development
- behaviour modification programmes
- assistance with sensory modulation
- development of anger management strategies
- a combination of some/all of the above

S.E.T teachers, in consultation with class teachers and parents, should plan their interventions carefully to address pupils' priority learning needs and to achieve the targets identified in the relevant continuum of support plan.

### **Selection of Children for School Support (Level 2)**

The judgement of the class teachers combined with standardised test and teacher designed assessments are used in the selection of pupils for school support [level 2]. The class teacher is in the best position to confirm whether the score achieved on the screening test is a true reflection of the pupil's performance. In selection of pupils for diagnostic testing, priority should be given to pupils at or below the 12th percentile on the Drumcondra Reading and or below the 10th percentile on the Drumcondra maths. Resources within our school are allocated on a needs basis and are not dependent on children having had assessments from outside agencies.

### **Parental Involvement**

Good parental engagement is a critical factor in enhancing outcomes for pupils with additional needs. Parental engagement is enhanced when parents are consulted in relation to their children's needs and strengths, on the supports and strategies being developed to support their children, and when they are involved in regular reviews of progress. The Continuum of Support process and the use of

Student Support Files provide valuable opportunities to engage with parents and to build a collaborative approach to identifying and responding to the needs of students with additional needs.

### **Record Keeping**

- When Drumcondra reading and Drumcondra maths are corrected a copy of the results will be sent to the S.E.T. Teachers. These will be studied carefully. These results will be stored in a filing cabinet and on Aladdin.
- S.E.T. teachers administer the NNRIT test in February to third classes. These results are also stored on Aladdin.
- Support plans, test results and other necessary documents will be kept on file by the relevant S.E.T team.
- Copies of psychological assessments will be kept in the Principal's office and by the relevant SET teacher. If a teacher working with the child needs information the assessments will be made available to him/her.

### **Transition from Junior to Senior School**

Special education teachers of the junior and senior schools will meet every June to discuss the transfer of pupils with additional needs. Parental consent will be sought by the junior school to facilitate the transfer of psychological assessments and other relevant reports.

### **Transition from Primary to Post Primary School**

- The SET teacher with responsibility for the child will meet parents at parent/teacher meetings held in November. They will discuss the options available. Parents will make the final decision.
- Parents will be advised to furnish the selected Post Primary school copies of reports as soon as possible.
- Where a meeting is convened between sixth class teachers and relevant post primary teachers/personnel a member of the S.E.T team will also attend if possible.

- Class teachers will complete passport documents in conjunction with S.E.T teachers.

### **Conclusion**

Teamwork, mutual support and trust are important factors in a collaborative process. As a staff we will strive to facilitate the successful inclusion of all children in our school.

This document was reviewed in November 2024 by J. Walsh, N.Dunning, M.Ryan, R. Mc Evoy, J. O Reilly, M. Cullivan, J. Beirne and S. Byrne Carter

This policy will be reviewed in 2026 or as directed by the D.E.S.