

Special Educational Needs Policy



"Live as free people"

St Peter's Community School

Approved November 2017

SCOPE

This policy refers to pupils in St. Peter's and involves parents/guardians, staff, school management and the Board of Management. Special Educational Needs refers to students with disabilities and students that require learning support. It also includes students requiring English Language Support (ELS) and students who are exceptionally able and gifted.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE SCHOOL'S MISSION STATEMENT

St. Peter's is a vibrant dynamic and caring school committed to the academic, personal and spiritual development of all its pupils. It has a Christian ethos within which other traditions are welcomed and respected.

We encourage excellence by fostering a love of learning and by promoting a rich and diverse range of educational opportunities. We believe in empowering and equipping our pupils to become well qualified and rounded individuals who can thrive in and contribute to an ever changing world.

In order to realise the aim of a caring and inclusive school it is important to outline our policy and commitment to students with Special Educational Needs.

RATIONALE

St. Peter's Community School caters for a wide range of abilities, aptitudes and interests. This involves careful assessment, planning and teaching of all students' needs. It is our policy to address all types of learning difficulties. Legislation (e.g. the Epsen Act 2001/the Disabilities Act 2005) particularly since the Education Act 1998 has put responsibilities on schools to 'ensure that the educational needs of students, including those with disability or special needs are identified and provided for'. (Section 9 Education Act 1998)

GOALS

- To ensure that all students, including those with special needs, are supported to realise their full potential.
- To provide an environment in which pupils with special educational needs feel welcome and included and become fully integrated into the school.
- To adopt a whole school approach towards the educational and personal development of students with special educational needs.

POLICY CONTENT

- The school will liaise and communicate with the parents, primary schools, SENO, NEPS and other relevant agencies to assist and support the student prior to coming to the school and during the student's years in the school.
- Identifying, assessing and testing pupils will be ongoing so that the necessary supports are applied for and put in place for pupils – subject to resources available.
- Resources and learning support hours will be directed toward pupils through special classes, one to one, small groups and team teaching.
- Withdrawal from one or more core subjects such as Irish will give students the opportunity to improve their literacy, numeracy and other vital skills.
- The school will endeavour to provide appropriate programmes and levels to all pupils.
- Individual education plans (IEPs), when introduced, will be implemented for each pupil. Meanwhile this process has begun and IEP's are being worked on. The pupil and the parent are central to this process.
- Teachers will use a variety of appropriate methodologies to enhance the learning of special educational needs students.
- Teachers and the SEN co-ordinator will monitor and keep records of work, assessments and other relevant material on students. Appropriate security and confidentiality will be maintained in relation to all student records.
- The SEN team will monitor, review and assess the progress of pupils at regular intervals.
- Special Needs Assistants, if necessary and approved by the SENO, will be provided.
- Homework, class work and assessments, where possible, will be differentiated to accommodate the needs of pupils.
- Reasonable accommodation in both in-house and for state examinations will be available where feasible. Students granted accommodations will have access to scribes, readers and the use of tape recorders.
- The school is committed to a learning support plan for the whole school with the emphasis on a continuum of supports for a variety of needs.
- The active involvement of parents as partners in the process and the provision of supports to parents will be established.
- Our aim is to have consistency and co-ordination of response across teachers, Special Needs Assistants (SNA's) and between home and school.
- Effective communication between parents, teachers, students, SNA's and outside personnel/agencies is vital if special needs students are to be successfully integrated into our school. Clear lines of communication will be established between all involved in dealing with the needs of such students.
- A team of teachers will form the SEN team in the school. The SEN team will help to co-ordinate, plan, implement and review special education provision in the school.
- Policies and systems for learning support will be reviewed on a regular basis. Change will be implemented as the need arises and resources are available.
- Pastoral care – special educational needs students are catered for through the existing pastoral care supports in the school.
- The training and continued professional development for all staff is a priority.
- The use of ICT through the provision of software/hardware for pupils with special needs is an integral part of the supports available in the school.

- Students requiring English language support will be withdrawn from classes and given additional English language teaching as resources are provided.
- Students that need English language support will be immersed in English for short periods (such as during Christmas exams) if resources are available.
- Exceptionally able and gifted children will be challenged both in and out of school through access to competitions, seminars and appropriate courses.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES in developing and implementing the policy

Board of Management

- To ensure that the policy is developed and evaluated from time to time.

Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for the school's learning support programme and for the operation of services for children with special educational needs. The Special Needs Co-ordinator's role is the management of learning support and special needs services and to consult with the Principal in relation to these services. The role of the Principal is:

- Work with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan on learning support and special needs.
- Monitor the implementation of the school plan on learning support and special needs on an ongoing basis.
- Monitor the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with very low achievement and/or special learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need.
- Keep teachers informed about the external services that are available and the procedures to be followed in initiating referrals.
- Help teachers to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of learning support teaching by providing guidance and advice with regard to teaching methods and materials and by encouraging teachers to avail of relevant in-career development.

SEN Co-ordinator/SEN Team

The SEN Co-ordinator will be assisted by the SEN team in all aspects of co-ordinating, planning, implementing and reviewing special needs provision in the school. Their role is:

- To inform and advise all teachers of programmes, resources, materials and levels of support required.

- Co-ordination of learning support services and personnel, both internal and external, which may be required.
- Co-ordination of screening, testing processes and assuming responsibility for recording and retention of the results obtained.
- To maintain a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and/or special educational services.
- Advising parents on procedures for availing of special needs services.
- Consult with class teachers on the identification of pupils who may need diagnostic assessment, taking into account the pupil's scores on the tests, teachers own views of the pupils difficulties and needs and the number of pupils to whom learning support can be provided.
- Carry out a comprehensive diagnostic assessment of each pupil who has been identified as experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties and in consultation with the class teacher and parents, identify the type and level of support that is needed to meet the pupil's needs.
- During supplementary teaching sessions – work intensively with pupils towards the attainment of learning targets set out in their individual profiles and learning programmes.
- Provision of ongoing appropriate support in the classroom for pupils for whom supplementary teaching/learning support has been reduced or discontinued.
- Identifying children who may have general or specific learning difficulties.
- In consultation with the Principal make applications for reasonable accommodations at Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations on the grounds of:
 1. A Specific learning difficulty/difficulties
 2. Physical difficulty/difficulties
 3. Hearing difficulty
 4. Visual difficulty
- Advise the principal on issues that may arise in the day to day implementation of the learning support programme in the school.

Learning Support Teacher/Resource Teacher

- To assess and record the child's needs and progress.
- To set specific time-related targets for each child and to agree these with the class teacher and the Principal.
- Direct teaching of the children in resource rooms.
- Advising class teachers in regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, suitable textbooks, use of information technology and of suitable software.
- Meeting and advising parents when necessary, accompanied by the class teacher as necessary.
- Meeting with other professionals, e.g. psychologists, speech and language therapists, etc.

Subject Teachers

The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching.

- A particular responsibility of the class teacher is to create a classroom environment in which learning difficulties can be prevented or at least alleviated.

This is best done by:

- Grouping children for instruction, providing lower achieving pupils with strategies for reading and problem solving
- Adapting learning materials for lower achieving pupils.

English Language Teacher (EAL Teacher)

The primary role of the teacher of new comer students is to provide a language support programme that will allow the child to access the mainstream curriculum and to socialise within the school community as quickly as possible.

The teacher of non-nationals will do this in the following ways:

- Develop and teach a programme of work that will allow children to access the mainstream curriculum as quickly as possible.
- Initial emphasis should be placed on the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The teachers of non-national students will endeavour to respect the cultural and religious beliefs of pupils at all times except where to do so would negatively impact on their academic progress or be in direct conflict with school policy.

SEN Team

The SEN team will be formed from a combination of the following staff as determined at the beginning of the school year and on the needs of the student(s):

- SEN Co-ordinator(s)
- Principal or Deputy Principal
- Career Guidance and/or Chaplain
- Learning Support/Resource teachers/SNA's

Special Needs Assistants

- Work closely with the teacher and the SEN co-ordinator to support and assist special educational needs students in the day to day life of the school.
- Are fully aware of the needs of their student(s) and work with the students in the classroom.
- Help the student to understand and complete tasks assigned by the teacher.
- Supervise and support special educational needs students at break times.
- Write weekly reports on their students.
- Provide feedback on the progress of the special educational needs students to the relevant subject teachers and the SEN co-ordinator.
- Should expect the support and help of the subject teacher in assisting the special educational needs students both in the class room and around the school.
- Will assist special needs pupils in examinations.
- Are flexible and may be assigned work (as per circular letter) in addition to or instead of their normal duties as determined by the Principal.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURE

Following consultation with all parties this policy will be implemented.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- That special needs students access and benefit from the supports provided by making real improvements in their academic performance and key areas such as literacy, numeracy, oral language, social and behavioural skills.
- That pupils with special educational needs make measurable progress in each academic year (as outlined in IEP's).
- That pupils with special educational needs play a full and active part in all aspects of the school.
- That SEN students will have high levels of school attendance.

MONITORING PROCEDURES

The Principal will monitor the implementation of the policy in conjunction with the staff. The Principal will keep the Board of Management informed of same.

REVIEW PROCEDURES

This policy will be reviewed by the special educational needs team on an annual basis. This review will take place at the beginning of each academic year.