



St. Colman's N.S.

Stradbally,

Co. Laois

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# **Learning Support & Special Educational Needs Policy**

This policy was drawn up by the Special Education Needs Team of St.Colman's, N.S., in collaboration with the Principal and staff. It will be presented to the Board of Management for ratification on the 12th of December 2013.

The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other interested persons, on the provision of effective learning support and educational interventions to pupils with special educational needs. It provides guidance on provision for those pupils who have been assessed as having a specific learning, physical and or emotional disability.

In St.Colman's N.S. we are dedicated to helping each child in our care to achieve her/his individual potential. The provision of effective Learning Support and Educational Intervention is integral to this commitment.

### **Aims of Learning Support**

- The overall aim of learning support is to optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in Literacy and Numeracy, before leaving primary school.
- Parallel with the above, our aim is to enhance the self-esteem of these pupils and encourage their individual strengths and talents.

### **Subsidiary Aims**

- Facilitate pupils to participate in the full curriculum at a level suitable to their abilities.
- 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.
- To provide supplementary teaching and additional support in Literacy and Numeracy.

- Involve parents in supporting their children's learning.
- Promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of a whole school policy on learning support.
- To establish early intervention and prevention programmes designed to enhance learning.
- To reduce difficulties in learning and help to avoid failure at an early stage.
- Direct resources towards pupils with greatest needs.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The area of Special Education is a collaborative responsibility shared by the Board of Management, the Principal, Special Education Teachers, Class Teachers, Parents and Pupils. It is important that everyone contributes to our Learning and Support and Special Educational Needs policy.

### **Role of Board of Management**

- To oversee the development, implementation and review of the provision of special educational support in our school.
- To ensure that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for all teachers.
- To provide a secure facility for storage of records to pupils in receipt of special education and services.
- To provide for staff development in identified areas.
- To facilitate the staff to work collaboratively in this area.
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### **Role of Principal**

- Assume overall responsibility for overseeing the development and implementation of the school's policy on learning support and special educational needs.
- Work with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan on learning support.
- Monitor the implementation of the school plan on learning support on an on-going

basis.

- Oversee the implementation of a whole school assessment and screening programme to identify needs in this area.
- Keep teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed in initiating referrals.
- Advise of and facilitate attendance at relevant courses.

## **Role of the Class Teacher**

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in her/his class, including those selected for supplementary teaching. In supporting the development and implementation of this policy, the role of the class teacher is

- Implement teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all pupils, and help to prevent the emergence of learning difficulties.
- For children who appear to be experiencing some difficulties in the classroom but are not yet deemed to be matching the criteria for supplementary teaching, a the class teacher will draft a Classroom Support Plan (NEPS Continuum of Support 2007) , in collaboration with the parents and the pupil him/herself (if appropriate).
- Implement the Continuum of Support in selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in;

## **Literacy and Numeracy.**

- For each pupil who is in receipt of learning support, to collaborate with the Learning Support Teacher in the development of an individual, or group profile, and learning programme, (School Support Plan-NEPS 2007) by identifying appropriate learning targets.
- For each pupil who is in receipt of resource teaching hours, to collaborate with the resource teacher in the development of an individual profile and learning programme  
  
(School Support Plus Plan –NEPS 2007) by identifying appropriate learning targets.
- Engage in regular consultation with the Principal, special education team and the parents.

## **Role of the Special Education Team**

- Development of School Support Plus/Individual Educational Plan for pupils in receipt of resource hours, in collaboration with parents, class teacher, Principal and relevant professionals.
- Development of School Support Plans for pupils selected for supplementary teaching.
- Maintain records for individuals, or groups, in receipt of learning support, or resource hours.
- To provide early intervention programmes, and supplementary teaching, for pupils in the Junior Cycle, in Literacy and Numeracy, in collaboration with the class teacher.
- Provide teaching in Literacy and Numeracy to pupils in the Senior Cycle of the school, who experience low achievement.
- Co-ordinate the implementation of whole school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, in line with the Guidelines of the Department of Educational and Skills.
- Assist in the implementation of a broad range of whole-school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to help to prevent learning difficulties.
- Provide advice to class teachers in areas such as individual pupil assessment and programme planning, as well as approaches to language development, reading, writing and mathematics for pupils experiencing difficulties.
- To provide advice and strategies to class teachers for pupils in receipt of resource hours for emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Contribute at school level to decision making regarding the purchase of learning resource, books and materials.
- Liaising with external agencies such as Psychologists, Occupational Therapist and Speech and Language Therapists to arrange for assessments and special provision for individual pupils with special needs.

- Maintaining a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and reviewing/revising that list periodically, in collaboration with parents, class teacher and principal.

## **Role of Parents**

- Collaborating and sharing relevant information with the teachers involved in their child's education.
- Provide a home environment in which there are opportunities, for the adults and children to partake together, in language, literacy and numeracy activities.
- Support the work of the school, by participating with the child, in suggested homebased activities, as outlined in the Class Support, School Support or School Support Plus Plans.
- Be aware that homework assigned by the Special Education Teacher should take priority over all other homework.
- Parents are advised to contact the school if the child is experiencing difficulty completing homework given by the class teacher. In such cases homework will be differentiated to take account of the child's abilities and condition.
- Discuss the child's progress, at least twice yearly, with the SEN teacher, to review and discuss targets.
- Preserve and enhance the self-esteem of the child.
- Ensure the child attends school and avoids unnecessary absences.

## **Intervention Strategies**

- Induction meeting with parents of new Junior Infants, stressing the importance of developing their children's oral language skills, early mathematical experiences and reading with the children.
- Provision of paired reading experience involving parent, or significant adult, with Junior and Senior Infant classes ( Reading Pals).
- During the school year, some pupils may display signs of specific learning and/or behavioural difficulties. In such cases, the class teacher will keep a record of

observations, liaise with parents, and collaborate with the SET, in accordance with the Continuum of Support, as directed by the DES.

- If the problems persist, after intervention strategies have been put in place, a psychological assessment may be recommended, after consultation with NEPS and the parents.

## **Enrolment**

- Some children will have clearly identified needs prior to enrolment. Parents should inform the school of these needs as early as possible, in order that the necessary resources might be sought and put in place.
- No child will be denied enrolment due to a disability, unless in the opinion of the Board of Management the pupil has special needs such that, even with additional resources available from DES, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the pupil with an appropriate education.
- Every effort will be made by the Board of Management to ensure that any provisions deemed necessary for the education of a child, will be put in place, where possible, in advance of the child starting school.

## **Early Intervention**

The school will implement learning support/ early intervention programmes in the Junior classes as an effective response to meeting the needs of pupils experiencing learning difficulties. The Learning Support Team, in collaboration with the Junior and Senior Infant teachers, will:

- Observe pupils in classroom activities, to identify their educational needs.
- Engage pupils in supervised oral and silent reading at appropriate levels of difficulty, in order to monitor reading ability and comprehension. Include a strong focus on oral language, laying the foundation for meaningful reading.
- Stress the interconnection of listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- Where difficulties have been identified in Numeracy, to focus on language and the

development of mathematical procedures and concepts, through the use of concrete materials and games.

- Withdrawal of pupils for small group teaching.
- Provision of in-class support through the use of team teaching and station teaching.

### **Assessment and Selection of Pupils for Supplementary Teaching**

- In Junior Infants to Second Class, early intervention and supplementary teaching for low achievers in Literacy, will be based on teachers' observation and diagnostic and standardised test results, for example, BIAP, MIST, Micra-T and NRIT
- In Junior Infants to Second Class, early intervention and supplementary teaching for low achievers in Numeracy, will be based on teachers' observation, and diagnostic and standardised test results, for example, Sigma-T.
- In Third to Sixth Class, pupils performing on or below the 12th Percentile, in standardised testing, Numeracy, and pupils on or below the 20th percentile in Literacy will be selected for supplementary teaching.
- Performance above the 21st Percentile in Literacy and the 13th percentile in Numeracy, will normally not be entitled to Learning Support. However, in some cases, learning support may be given to such pupils, if there is time available. In addition, support may be given to pupils with an assessed specific learning difficulty and higher standardised test scores, eg dyslexia or dyscalculia, if there is time available.

### **Organisation of Work**

- Team-Teaching is one method used in the delivery of learning support in the classroom.
- Some pupils will be withdrawn from the classroom, to receive tuition, on a group, or, individual basis, depending on the identified needs.
- In some cases, children with emotional and /or behavioural needs, as well as those



with identified physical needs, may require respite from the busy classroom, periodically during the school day.

- Timetabling will be flexible to take account of classroom activities, and to ensure that the pupils continue to benefit from a balanced curriculum.
- Monitoring Progress
- Ongoing structured observation and assessment of Language, Literacy and Numeracy Skills of pupils by the teachers in the Infant classes, to facilitate early identification and possible need for intervention.
- Formative observation and testing of the pupils in all classes by the class teachers.
- Implementation of the school's policies on screening of pupils and selection for supplementary teaching in Literacy and Numeracy, by administering and scoring appropriate screening measures.
- Standardised and diagnostic testing set in place by the SEN teachers.
- Record Keeping in the pupils' files, where test results and other records of progress will be kept, in a secure filing cabinet.

### **Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching**

- Meetings will be held, at least twice yearly, between the parents and the SEN teacher, in cases where supplementary teaching is to be continued, in order to discuss and revise targets.
- A meeting will be held at the end of the instructional term, between parents and the SEN teacher, where targets have been met. In such cases supplementary teaching may be discontinued.

### **Referral for Assessment by Other Agencies**

- Within the Continuum of Support, if a School Support Plan has been implemented, and the pupil is not making progress, consideration will be given to recommending the child for a Psychological Assessment.
- Parents will be invited to discuss the matter with the Class Teacher and the Learning Support Teacher. Advice will be given on the various options, if, for example, the

need for Speech and Language, Occupational Therapy or Behavioural/Clinical assessment has been identified.

- Parents will be required to give written permission for the assessment. They will also be asked to give written permission for the sharing of information, between the professionals involved, on the subsequent report.
- If the professional involved in the assessment identifies a specific difficulty, or disability, and recommends resource teaching hours, an application, will be made to the SENO for the provision of these hours. The application will be discussed with the parents, and must be signed by them, before the application form is forwarded to the SENO at the NCSE.

### **Success Criteria**

- It is envisaged that, as this policy is implemented, the pupils will attend learning support for a maximum of 3 years. It is hoped that the learning difficulties will be remediated within the Junior Cycle of the school.
- It is acknowledged that some pupils will continue to present with learning needs as they progress to the Senior Cycle, and these pupils will continue to receive learning support.
- Where a recommendation for further assessment has been followed through, and resource teaching hours have been granted, the pupils will continue to receive this allocation. A follow up review, or, in some cases a full assessment may be advised, under the guidance of NEPS, before transition to Second Level.
- With the co-operation and collaboration of parents, early intervention for pupils experiencing learning difficulties, is of paramount importance in the implementation of this policy.
- Implementing the DES guidelines for the Continuum of Support, and the development, implementation and review of the various Support Plans (NEPS), is

central to the success of this policy.

- Contact with, and referral to other agencies and professionals, i.e. NEPS, The HSE and Private Practitioners, is essential, as soon as the need is identified.
- Recommendations for the School Support and School Support Plus plans will be followed and reviewed, in order to provide the best outcome for the individual needs of the pupil.

## **Implementation**

This policy supersedes the school's previous learning support policy and will be implemented upon ratification by the Board of Management.

## **Ratification and Communication**

The Board of Management ratified this policy on the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ , (Chairperson, BOM)

St. Colman's N.S. does not have adequate resources to disseminate all of its policies to all the concerned members of the wider school community. The policy is communicated to the members of the BOM and is available to the wider school community through the parents' representatives on the BOM. All St. Colman's N.S. policies are available for inspection in the school and shortly on the website [www.stcolmansns.ie](http://www.stcolmansns.ie)

## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years. The next review is scheduled for December 2015.