



Special Educational Needs policy

Introduction

Scoil Mocheallóg is a co-educational mainstream primary school catering for children from mixed social and cultural backgrounds. The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers and parents and other interested parties on the provision of effective learning support to pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties, as well as to fulfill our obligations under the Education Act. The following categories of pupils will receive supplementary teaching from the Learning Support Teacher and the Resource Teacher.

- Pupils whose achievement is at or below the 12th percentile on standardised tests in English or Mathematics.
- Pupils with learning difficulties, pupils with mild social or emotional difficulties and pupils with mild co-ordination or attention control difficulties associated with identified conditions.
- Pupils who have been identified as being in the low incidence category (Appendix 1 Sp. Ed. Circular 02/05) will receive an individual allocation of support through the Special Education Needs Organiser. (SENO)
- Pupils who have special educational needs arising from high incidence disabilities (borderline mild general learning disability, mild general learning disability and specific learning disability).

The school currently has the following provisions to cater for children with Special Education Needs:

- 2 Learning Support Teacher
- 5 Resource Teachers for children with Special Educational Needs
- 4 SNAs: 2 with 32 hours and two with 28 hours.

Learning Support Policy

The principal aim of Learning Support is to optimise the teaching and learning process so as to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.

Specific Objectives of Learning Support

Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

- Facilitate pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level
- 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

Guiding Principles

The school recognises that effective learning programmes are based on the following principles:

- Effective whole-school policies
- Whole school involvement
- Provision of intensive early intervention
- Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need.

Prevention Strategies

As a means of preventing the occurrence of learning difficulties, as far as possible, the following strategies are being implemented:

- The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to language development.
- The development and implementation of an agreed whole school approach to the Maths programme.
- Promotion of parental involvement through their attendance at induction meetings for parents of incoming Junior Infants
- Formal and informal Parent/Teacher meetings
- School circulars
- Class-based early intervention by the class teacher resulting in provision of additional support
- Ongoing observation and assessment of pupils by Class Teacher

Selection of Pupils for Learning Support

Previous to any pupil being referred to the Learning Support Teacher the classroom teacher consults on a programme suitable to the pupil's needs based on his/her observations.

The principle of Early Intervention applies; therefore pupils in Junior classes are given priority in the allocation of Learning Support

- Junior Infant pupils are screened using teacher observation
- From Senior Infants upwards, all pupils are screened annually, using appropriate standardised tests. Micra -T, MIST, NRIT and Sigma-T are administered by the class teacher
- Priority for Learning Support is given to those pupils who perform at or below the 12th Percentile, excluding in the main, pupils who receive Resource Teaching.
- In the case of pupils performing at or below the 12th percentile, the screening process is followed by a meeting between the Class Teacher, the Learning Support Teacher and the parents concerning the pupil's performance and supplementary teaching is offered.

In the allocation of places for Learning Support, the following are prioritised

- Children in 1st and 2nd classes at or below the 12th percentile in literacy.
- Children in 3rd class and 4th class at or below the 12th percentile in literacy.
- Senior Infants, identified by the Class Teacher, through Teacher observation.
- Children in 1st and 2nd classes at or below the 12th percentile in numeracy.
- Children in 3rd and 4th classes at or below the 10th percentile in numeracy – depending on overall caseload.
- Support for children presenting with difficulties in literacy and numeracy in all classes.

Provision of Supplementary Teaching

- The primary work of the Learning Support Teacher is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils identified above.
- Classes will be intensive in terms of frequency.
- A system of withdrawal and/or in-class support will operate in response to the needs of the pupils.
- The Learning Support Teacher decides the size of groups, taking into account the individual needs of pupils and the overall caseload.
- One to one teaching may be provided where small group teaching has not been effective and caseload permits.

Individual Learning Programme and Group Learning Programme

The individual learning plan/group learning plan will be in accordance with the criteria as advised in the Learning Support Guidelines, issued by the DES in 2000. The plan will address the pupils' full range of needs and will include:

- Details from Class Teacher
- Assessment results
- Other relevant information, e.g. reports from other agencies
- Learning strengths and attainments
- Priority learning needs
- Learning targets
- Class-based learning activities
- Supplementary support activities to include ICT
- Home support activities

The Learning Support Teacher and/or Class Teacher may meet parents to discuss the child's progress in the light of the review.

The Learning Support Teacher will maintain the following documentation in individualised files

- Individual Profile Learning Programme
- Short term planning and programme record
- Other records,
- Samples of written work

Time-tabling

The provision of learning support is in addition to the regular class teaching in English and Maths.

Efforts are made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curricular area each time they attend learning support.

The provision of learning support may include withdrawal of pupils from their classroom and/or in-class tuition. In-class support, if appropriate, will be jointly designed and monitored by the Class Teacher and Learning Support Teacher.

Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching

In general children should not stay for more than two years in Supplementary Teaching unless they are still at or below the 12th percentile.

Following the end of instructional term, review as detailed above, a decision is made to continue /discontinue the provision of supplementary teaching.

The criteria on which this decision is made include:

- Has the pupil achieved some/all of the learning targets set?
- Will the pupil be able to cope in the classroom learning context?

A decision to continue the provision of supplementary teaching will result in a revision of the pupil's ILP.

The decision-making process will involve consultation between the Class Teacher, Learning Support Teacher and parents. Account will also be taken of the overall learning support demands in the school.

Communication Strategies

The operation of an effective communication system between all parties involved in meeting the learning needs of the child is considered essential.

The various strands of this system include:

- Meeting parents of Junior Infant children to explain school policies and how parents and teachers can work together for the benefit of pupils.

- Informing parents of concerns regarding progress in school.
- Consultation between Class teacher and Learning Support teacher following a low score on a screening test
- Consultation between Principal and/or Learning Support teacher and/or Class teacher and parents following a low score on a screening test, including the seeking of approval for diagnostic assessment and provision of supplementary teaching
- Ongoing communication between the LST and the class teacher
- Regular communication between the LST and parents

Referral to Out-of-school Agencies

- The RT co-ordinates the referral of pupils to outside agencies, e.g. Educational Psychologist.
- The Principal and/or RT and/or Class Teacher meet with the parents to discuss the need for the referral and to seek consent.
- The class teacher completes the necessary referral form in consultation with the appropriate school personnel.
- The external professional visits the school to meet with the pupil, parents, principal, class teacher and the RT as appropriate and assessment is conducted.
- This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed.
- Where concern arises regarding the manner or speed of the follow-through post assessment, such concern is pursued by the Principal with the out-of-school agency.

Roles and Responsibilities

The implementation of our policy will be supported as follows:

Principal

- To co-ordinate Learning Support/Resource and Special Needs services.

Learning Support Teacher

- Assisting in the implementation of a broad range of whole school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to prevent learning difficulties
- Development of individual profiles and learning programmes for pupils who are selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with the class teacher and parents
- Maintaining planning for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of learning support
- Meetings with parents to discuss pupil's progress
- Providing teaching in English and/or Mathematics to pupils who experience low achievement
- Contributing to the development of policy at the whole school level and at the cluster level where applicable
- Liaising with class teacher on individual pupil's needs and progress
- Maintaining a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and special educational needs
- Maintaining and reviewing pupil records
- Liaising with Principal, teachers and parents.

Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the pupils' learning needs within his / her class. Their responsibilities include:

- Making parents aware of the concerns of the school about their child's progress
- Outlining the schools practise with regard to diagnostic testing and follow up

- procedures
- Where possible attending meetings between Learning Support/Resource Teacher and pupil's parents
- Consult and co-operate with Learning Support Teacher or Resource Teacher on pupil's (ILP)
- Be alert to the possibility that some children may have a specific learning difficulty and bring it to the attention of the learning support teacher
- Modify class programmes to suit the needs of pupils
- Where there is a classroom assistant outline their duties clearly for the instructional term

Parent

Support for and participation in their child's learning

Pupil

It is important for the students to have an input into the development, implementation and review of their own learning. By doing so they can:

- become more independent as learners
- become aware of different learning styles
- become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses or needs
- enjoy success and evaluate their progress
- excel at and enjoy many curricular and extra curricular activities which would not be practical in the mainstream class due to class size.
- develop ownership of the skills and strategies taught during supplementary teaching and apply these strategies and skills in their mainstream class situation

Board of Management

Oversee implementation and review of the Learning Support/Resource Teacher policy and the provision of adequate resources, accommodation and storage.

Provision of Resources

Resources for the provision of Learning Support include a variety of textbooks, library books and ancillary materials and oral language development materials.

A variety of testing materials are also in use which include standardised, diagnostic screening, reading attainment, phonological awareness and Maths attainment.

Learning support resources will primarily be used in the Learning Support/Resource room.

The resources may be made available to class teachers following consultation with LST.

Success Criteria

The school-wide implementation of this policy will result in enhancement of pupil learning in the following ways:

- Improved standards of academic achievement with the pupil's individual learning programme
- Enabling the discontinuation of the provision of learning support based on positive assessment results
- Enhanced parental involvement in supporting their child's learning needs
- Increased opportunities for effective communication between school personnel in relation to pupils' progress.

Resource Teaching Policy

Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other relevant persons on the provision of effective teaching support for children experiencing a learning disability or any special needs and to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act.

Definition of Special Needs

We understand Special Needs to be that as defined in D.E.S. circulars. Interventions with pupils will be delivered in a manner that best meets the needs identified, which may be through group or individual teaching.

Identification and Selection of Children with Special Needs

Concerns about children may arise in a number of ways:

- Parents inform the principal or class teacher of a concern they have regarding their child.
- Teachers may have a concern regarding a child in their class.
- Concerns may arise following standardised testing.

Procedures to be followed

- Having consulted with the teacher and parents involved, the Principal will seek appropriate assessment through the N.E.P.S. with a view to qualifying for support from the Resource Teacher.
- In the situation where parents refuse to grant consent for their child to attend for either a psychological assessment or learning support, a record of the offer and its rejection should be kept in the child's file.
- The Education Welfare Act 2000 authorises the Board of Management with the consent of the parent of a child to arrange for a child to be assessed as to his or her intellectual, emotional and physical development by such a person as may be determined by the Board with the concurrence of the parent.(Section 10-4)

Aims of Special Needs Teaching

The aims of the Special Needs Teaching are:

- To support as far as possible the integration of the child with special needs into the mainstream setting.
- To develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in the child.
- To promote collaboration among the staff in the implementation of the whole school policies on special needs.

Role of the Resource Teacher

The role of the resource teacher is to provide support for children with special needs by:

- Developing an individual learning programme for each pupil in consultation with other partners in education.
- Assessing and recording the child's needs and progress.
- Setting specific time-related targets for each child and agreeing these with the class teacher and principal.
- Direct teaching of the child, either in a separate room or within the mainstream

class.

- Collaborating with class teachers in regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, text books, I.C.T. and other related matters.
- Meeting and advising parents when necessary, accompanied by the class teacher as necessary.
- Meeting with relevant professionals in the child's interest e.g. psychologists, speech and language therapists and visiting teachers.

Timetabling

- The provision of special needs teaching is in addition to regular teaching.
- Time allocated per child will depend on the demands on the service and the hours authorised by the SENO.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curricular area each time they attend except where a pupil has been exempted from a subject by the DES.
- Likewise the school will endeavour to ensure that pupils do not miss classes they particularly enjoy such as Art, P.E. or Computer.

Role of the Class Teacher, Parents, Principal and Board of Management

The role of all the above in the education of children who have allocated resource teaching is as in the preceding section, i.e. the section on Learning Support.

Review

It will be reviewed as circumstances may warrant.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management

A copy of the policy will be made available to teachers and other parents on request.

Ratified by Board of Management on 06-05-2014

**Signed: Canon William Fitzmaurice
Chairperson, Board of Management**