

Saint Fiachra's Senior School

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This review of the Special Education Provision Policy was carried out by the Special Education team of Maura Ryan, Catherine Smith, Marie Perrin, Eimear Burke, Sandra McIntyre and Elaine Gorman in the spring of 2015. The policy takes cognisance of directives contained in the Education Act (1998), The Learning Support Guidelines DES (2000) and the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (2004) and subsequent DES circulars such as 02/05 and 30/ 2014.

Monitoring of this policy shall be ongoing, as the school's profile will change from year to year.

Plan Outline

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**Where the term SET, Special Education Teacher is used, it refers to the Learning Support/ Resource teacher.*

Situation

St. Fiachra's Senior School is a large urban co-educational school catering for students from 3rd - 6th classes. Our enrolment is approximately 610 children. There are currently 5 third classes, 6 fourth classes, 6 fifth classes and 5 sixth classes. There are 22 mainstream teachers, 7 Special Education teachers, and 5 Special Needs Assistants. *There is no EAL teacher due to insufficient numbers of children who qualify for EAL support.*

Aims of Special Education Support

The principal 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 socialisation and proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.

The class teacher and the Special Education teacher working in tandem provide this support in school. Many of the children are further supported by Special Needs Assistants. (See Special Needs Assistants Policy)

Our policies and approaches are developed through consultation that provides a means of co-ordinating the work of teachers, parents and others on behalf of these pupils. Central to this process is the enhancement of classroom-based learning and includes, as appropriate, supplementary teaching by the Special Education Teacher in the classroom and in the learning support room. (LS Guidelines DES p15).

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

The role of supporting learning is the collaborative responsibility of all. It is envisaged that the Board of Management, Principal Teacher, Class Teachers, Special Education Teachers, parents and children will all contribute to the development and implementation of the school's plan on Special Education and Learning Support.

The Board of Management

The Board of Management has an important role in developing, supporting and monitoring school policy on learning support and special education. The Board of management will discharge this responsibility as per Learning Support Guidelines and the Education Act (1998).

The Board of Management shall:

- Oversee the development, implementation and review of the Special Education Policy;
- Ensure that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the Special Education Teachers;
- Provide a secure facility for storage of records relating to pupils in receipt of Special Education Support.

The Principal Teacher

'The principal has overall responsibility for the schools learning support programme and for the operation of services for children with special educational needs'. (Learning Support Guidelines p38).

The Education Act (1998) and the EPSEN Act (2004) have all reiterated this responsibility.

In St. Fiachra's Senior School, The Principal Teacher:

- Assumes overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policies on special education in co-operation with the class teachers and SETs;
- Works with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan on learning support and special needs;
- Monitors the implementation of the school plan on Special Education and special needs on an ongoing basis;
- Monitors the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with very low achievement;
- Oversees the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need;

- Encourages continuous professional development of the staff to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of learning-support;
- Liases regularly with the SETs, “*In order to support the implementation of school policy on learning support as outlined in the school plan, and specifically, ... arranges meetings with the learning- support teachers at least **once each school term** to discuss the implementation of the school plan on learning support.* (Learning-Support Guidelines) The meetings are typically held at the end of **October, February and in May** after testing;
- Keeps teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed for initial referrals.

The Principal and BOM also facilitate attendance of the SETs at annual ILSA and IATSE conferences and such cluster meetings as are arranged by the NEPS psychologist assigned to the school.

The Special Education Co-ordinator

The deputy principal fills the role of co-ordinating learning-support and special needs services in St. Fiachra’s school. The co-ordinator oversees the day-to-day operation of Special Education programme, while final responsibility rests with the principal.

The co-ordinator of Special Education:

- Maintains a list of pupils who are in receipt of special education ;
- Helps to co-ordinate the case loads and work schedules of the Special Education Teachers and SNAs;
- Liases with external agencies such as psychological services to arrange assessments and referrals;
- Liases with parents and organises consultations and appointments with support agencies;
- Liases specifically with NCSE in relation to LITH and the acquisition of assistive technology, SNA assistance etc;
- Liases with the staff of St. Fiachra’s Junior School in relation to transfer of documentation pertaining to LITH / LS pupils at transfer;
- Aids the completion of the process of application for exemption from Irish in accordance with Circular 12/96.
- Is responsible for the purchase of materials and resources used by SETs.
- Is responsible for standardised testing in the school by facilitating testing which includes supply of materials, timetabling, and directing correction;
- Ensures that all members of staff are familiar with and adopt the staged approach to Assessment, Identification and Programme Learning.

Staged Approach to Assessment, Identification and Programme Planning

Stage 1: Classroom Support

A class teacher or parent may have concerns about the academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development of certain pupils. Screening measures, which may include standardised, norm-referenced test for pupils and behavioural checklists, will be administered, where appropriate. All children are screened in May each year.

The class teacher in consultation with the child’s parent/guardian and member of the support team will draw up a short, simple eight week plan for extra help to be

provided. This **continuum of support** is implemented within the normal classroom setting and at home, in the relevant areas of learning and/or behavioural management. The success of the classroom support plan will be reviewed with appropriate parental involvement. If, after this review, concern remains, the special education support team in the school will be consulted about the desirability of intervention at Stage II.

Stage II: School Support

If intervention is considered necessary at Stage II, then the pupil will be referred to the S.E.T., with parents' permission, for further diagnostic testing. If this diagnostic assessment suggests that supplementary teaching would be beneficial, this will be arranged. ***The parents and the class teacher will be involved with the S.E.T. in drawing up the learning programme, which would include appropriate interventions for implementation in the home, in the classroom, and during supplementary teaching.*** The learning support /resource teacher and the class teacher will review, after the 1st instructional term, in consultation with parents, the rate of progress of each pupil receiving supplementary teaching. If significant concerns remain, then it may be necessary to provide interventions at Stage III.

In the case of pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties, it is recognised that with serious difficulties, more urgent action may be needed. In these cases the pupil's needs will, with parents' permission, be discussed with the relevant NEPS psychologist and/or the case should be referred to the clinical services of the Health Services Executive. This may lead to a more detailed behavioural management programme, to be implemented at home and in class, or to referral for further specialist assessment. (Stage III)

Stage III: School Support Plus

Some pupils who will continue to present with significant learning needs will require more intensive intervention at Stage III. The school may formally request a consultation and, where appropriate, an assessment of need from a specialist outside the school in respect of pupils with learning difficulties or with mild or moderate behavioural problems (or both) who have failed to make progress after supplementary teaching or the implementation of a behavioural programme and in respect of pupils with serious emotional disturbance and/or behavioural problems. Such specialist advice may be sought from psychologists, paediatricians, speech and language therapists, audiologists, etc.

The SET and the class teacher, in consultation with the relevant specialist or specialists will then draw up a learning programme that includes identification of any additional resources that are considered necessary in order to implement the programme. *The parents will be fully consulted throughout this process.* This programme will be the subject of regular reviews, leading to revisions of the learning programme and referral for specialist review, as necessary.

Role of the Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for all children in his/her class.

The class teacher will:

- Implement the staged approach as outlined in the policy above;
- At the end of Stage I: Classroom Support, where concern still remains, meet with parents and consult with them to obtain written permission for any diagnostic testing to be carried out;

- Following further consultation, obtain permission from parents for the child to be included in the Special Education programme, see Appendix 1-4.

The Special Education Teacher (SET)

The main focus of the special education teacher's work will be the provision of supplementary teaching of pupils in the pupil's own classroom and/or in a learning support room. In this the SETs are guided by Circular 02/05 which recommends that 'wherever possible' schools should provide additional teaching support for pupils in the mainstream classroom or in small groups. Such an approach will help to maximise effective and efficient teaching and learning and to minimise disruptions to the class programme.'

In implementing the School Support Plan, the SETs

- Develop an Individual Profile and Group / Individual Learning Programme for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching, in consultation with class teachers and parents. (School Support)
- Develop a Personal Pupil Plan (PPP) including a care plan for all pupils availing of SNA support.
- Maintain a monthly record of work for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of learning support.
- Liase with the Special Education Co-ordinator to arrange screening and special provision for pupils with special needs.
- Co-ordinate the implementation of the selection criteria for supplementary teaching as detailed in this policy.
- Contribute to the development of policy on Learning-Support at whole school level.
- Contribute at school level to decision making regarding the purchase of learning resources, books and materials. Responsibility for the purchase of materials rests with the SEC (*Special Education Co-ordinator*)
- Administer a range of formal and informal assessments and maintain records of the outcome of those assessments which are used to inform planning.
- Liase with parents when the School Support Plan is being:
 - Developed,
 - Reviewed, or
 - Discontinued.

Parents

"Parents through their unique knowledge of their own child, have much to contribute to their child's learning programmes" (Learning Support Guidelines p52).

Parents contribute to the initial diagnostic assessment by sharing insights in to their child's development and learning difficulties, by discussing the outcomes of the assessment and by participating in the selection of learning targets and associated activities based on the child's needs.

Where a child is in receipt of supplementary teaching from a special education teacher, *the parents/guardians:*

- Participate in the development of the child's Learning Programme (LP);
- Discuss their child's progress with the class teacher and Special Education Teacher and in cases where supplementary teaching is to be continued, discuss the revised learning targets and activities in their child's Learning Plan.

- Implement suggested home-based activities outlined in the child's L.P.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

The involvement of pupils in the development, implementation and review of their own learning programmes is an important principle underlying effective supplementary teaching.

A Pupil in receipt of supplementary teaching should, as appropriate:

- Become familiar with the learning targets that have been set for them in their learning programme.
- Be an active participant in his/her own learning programme, in L.S. sessions, in the classroom and at home.
- Contribute to the evaluation of their progress by participating in appropriate assessment activities, including self-assessment.

Selection Criteria for Inclusion in Special Education

The following selection criteria encompass all current guidelines and general good practice. The SET will select pupils in accordance with these criteria, stopping at (1) if his / her caseload is full, but will continue on to point (2) caseload permitting, and so through the selection criteria .

- (1) Pupils diagnosed as having Low Incidence learning disabilities, where such support is deemed necessary. (Cir. 02/05 – App. 1)
- (2) Pupils diagnosed as having High Incidence learning disabilities, where such support is deemed necessary. (Cir. 02/05 – App. 1)
- (3) Pupils scoring at / below the 12th percentile on standardised assessments in literacy.
- (4) Pupils scoring at / below the 10th percentile on standardised assessments in mathematics.
- (5) Pupils scoring at / below the 14th percentile on standardised assessments in literacy.
- (6) Pupils scoring at / below the 12th percentile on standardised assessments in mathematics.
- (7) Pupils scoring above the 14th percentile on standardised assessments in literacy, who continue to experience difficulty, despite Classroom Support.
- (8) Pupils scoring above the 12th percentile on standardised assessments in mathematics, who continue to experience difficulty, despite Classroom Support.
- (9) Low Incidence Special Education Needs
For pupils with special educational needs arising from low incidence disabilities, resource teaching hours are allocated in addition to the general allocation.

Programme Planning

At the beginning of a term of supplementary teaching, planning will be based on the individual needs of the pupils. Once supplementary teaching has begun, the records and evaluations of supplementary teaching sessions are used as a basis for on-going planning, teaching and learning.

The Individual Profile is used to record relevant information relating to a pupil's learning attainments and his/her learning strengths and needs.

This school adopts an *inclusive approach* to the education of children with Special Education needs. This means that the pupil, the pupil's Class Teacher, parents, the Special Education Teacher and the school principal along with any other relevant people such as guardians, educational psychologists, occupational and language therapists are included in the process where practicable.

Information to be included in the Individual Profile includes:

- Details of the pupil.
- Class Teacher
- S.E.T.
- Information from assessment screening and diagnostic tests.
- Observations.
- Recommendations
- Learning needs
- Learning strengths.

Programme Implementation

The learning programme will be implemented in the most appropriate way taking into account the needs of the child and/or group. This may include in-class support or withdrawal. This decision will be made in consultation with the Class Teacher, SET and the child's parents / guardians.

In-Class Support

In St. Fiachra's SNS, we employ several models of In-Class Support, including *Alternative Teaching and Parallel Teaching*.

The Alternative Teaching model involves one SET working with the class teacher for set period.

The Parallel Teaching model involves two SETs working with the class teacher and is conducted with two class groups simultaneously .

Programme Monitoring and Review

Pupil activities will be monitored during supplementary teaching and will be recorded on the monthly report. This will be done in consultation between the Principal, Class Teacher, Parents and S.E.T. In St. Fiachra's Senior National School there is ongoing monitoring of each pupil's progress in relation to the attainment of short term objectives using the weekly planning and progress record so that class teaching and supplementary teaching continue to be responsive to the pupil's needs at all times.

The pupil's progress is continually monitored. This review details progress made to date and culminates in a decision on the level of support that the pupil will need in the future, the form that that support will take, and where appropriate, a revision of the learning targets and activities in the child's LP.

Continuing / Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching

Where supplementary teaching is to be continued, a revised Learning Programme will be developed. This is done in consultation the Principal, Class Teacher, Parents and S.E.T. and will reflect any changes in emphasis that result from the review of progress.

Supplementary teaching will normally be discontinued where:

- The pupil, on assessment, is performing above the percentile laid down in the criteria for receiving learning support;
- Learning targets have been met;
- It is considered to be in the child's best interests.

Learning support will only be withdrawn after consultation with the Parents, Class Teacher, SET and the Principal.

Parental Prerogative

We recognise and respect the parents' right to choose not to avail of the recommended Learning Support for their child. In such circumstances, parents will be requested to inform the Principal in writing confirming their position. The child's progress will continue to be monitored and kept under review.

Timetabling

The supplementary teaching that pupils receive is in addition to their regular class programme in English/Maths and every effort is made to ensure that pupils do not "miss out" on the same curricular area each time they receive supplementary teaching outside of the classroom. The L.S Guidelines place considerable emphasis on the central importance of appropriate classroom based intervention and in St. Fiachra's the introduction of the provision of supplementary teaching by the SETS to pupils in their own classroom with the approval of and in co-operation with the class teacher is an integral part of our Learning Support policy.

Reviewing Policy on Learning Support and Revising the School Plan

A comprehensive review and revision of the elements of the school plan dealing with L.S will take place in May 2019. This will take into consideration the views of the B.O.M, parents, the Principal, the class teacher and the Special Education Team. The Principal will instigate this review. Changes in specific practices will be made as deemed necessary. However, modifications to practice may be made from time to time outside of the formal review.

Parent Teacher Meetings

By the very nature of Special Education, consultations with parents take place regularly. Special Education Teachers also meet parents formally as part of the school Parent/Teacher meetings either with the class teacher or independently as agreed with the class teacher.

Weekly Planning & Record Keeping

Records are maintained by the Special Education Team in respect of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching. These include an Individual Profile and group/individual Learning Programme and a monthly record of work completed. Other records that provide evidence of the pupil's progress towards agreed learning targets include checklists, running records, samples of written work etc. All records are stored securely in the SETS individual base classroom.

Implementation Date June 2015 Formal Review Date May 2019

Ratification and Communication

This review ratified by staff and BOM June 2015.