

St Joseph's Secondary School Castlebar Special Educational Needs Policy

Mission Statement

St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar, Co. Mayo is a voluntary Catholic Secondary School for girls under the trusteeship of **CEIST** (Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust). We aim to provide a holistic Christian Education in co-operation with staff, students, parents/guardians, Board of Management and the community. We work to create equality for all in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We strive to excellence in learning and endeavour to help each student to reach her full potential in a positive, caring and happy environment.

Definition of Special Education Needs

For the purpose of this policy the definition of special educational needs is that given in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004). In this act, the term "special educational needs" is defined as:

'a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition.....'

(Government of Ireland, 2004b, section 1)

Rationale of Special Educational Needs Policy

There is a substantial body of legislation relating to the education of students with special educational needs. This legislation includes the Education Act (1998), the Equal Status Act (2000) and Equality Act (2004), the Education Welfare Act (2000), the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (E.P.S.E.N. Act 2004) and the Data Protection Acts (1998 and 2003). These acts provide a statutory basis for education policy and provision by the Department of Education and Skills and its agencies in relation to the education of all children, including those with special educational needs. Consequently there is a legal obligation on schools to provide for the diversity of needs of all students in its care.

There is also a desire in St. Joseph's to meet the requirements of this legislation in the best interest of our students.

Aims of this S.E.N. Policy

- To highlight the importance of a whole school approach to the provision for students with special educational needs.

- To reflect the school's ethos in accepting diversity within an inclusive environment.
- To set out procedures and practices to be followed in the provision for students with special educational needs.
- To inform the whole school community of the procedures and practices used in relation to SEN provision.
- To set out roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the education of students with SEN and to outline the expected involvement and contribution of Government Departments and State agencies.
- To act as a mechanism to assess and review the resources required in relation to education provision for children with SEN.

Introduction

We at St. Joseph's are mindful of the students' needs and difficulties. Those involved in providing additional support education together with mainstream teachers endeavour to enable students to reach their full potential in a caring and safe environment. The needs of these students are monitored on an on-going basis and when necessary, in consultation with parents and other relevant parties, recommendations may be made as to how best these needs could best be met.

In-school Roles and Responsibilities

Special Educational Needs Team (SEN Team)

The SEN team facilitates the organisation and provision of education for students with SEN and provides a suitable structure to enable teachers in specialist roles related to inclusion to collaborate with one another and with mainstream teachers in an efficient manner. The members of the SEN team work collaboratively in the development, implementation and review of policies and procedures for identifying and meeting the special educational needs of individual students.

Currently, the core members of the SEN team are the principal and the SEN co-ordinator. They work closely with the mainstream teachers and with those in pastoral care roles, Special Needs Assistants and other relevant staff members in providing inclusive education for students with SEN. The deputy principal, learning support teacher/resource teacher, the guidance counsellor, year head, class tutor and SNA are also very closely linked to the SEN team.

SEN Coordinator

The SEN coordinator:

- Collates relevant information on incoming first year students, draws up lists of those in receipt of extra tuition, at primary school through extra resource

hours or learning support. The coordinator inputs this information into the planning for the provision of extra help for students with SEN.

- Oversees the provision of additional learning to students with SEN across all year groups
- Liaises with students, parents, teachers, special needs assistants, NEPS, Special Education Support Service, Guidance Counsellor, Student Support Team, Speech & Language Therapists, Specialist Visiting Teachers, the Department of Education & Skills and all other agencies involved in the student's development and well-being.
- Arranges educational psychological assessments, in consultation with students and parents
- Organises and applies for Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations (R.A.C.E.) for students with special educational needs. Parents are informed of this service and participate fully in the application process.
- Attends in-service training regularly on all aspects of provision for students with additional learning needs.
- Files educational psychological reports and other confidential information related to students with additional needs.
- Summarises students' psychological reports and makes these summaries available to teaching staff.
- Compiles folders containing classroom strategies for students with special educational needs and makes these folders available to teaching staff.
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Resource Hours

Resource teaching hours are allocated on behalf of individual students with special educational needs in accordance with each student's assessed special needs. Resource teaching is done on a one-to-one basis or in small groups.

This service is provided by:

- Withdrawing students for additional classes in literacy and mathematics, or both, as appropriate.
- Providing specific support for students with special educational needs in other areas such as development of social skills and life skills.

The role of the resource teacher includes:

- Assessing and recording the student's needs and progress.
- Direct teaching of the students in a separate room.
- Meeting and advising parents when necessary.
- On-going meetings with principal, guidance counsellor, other relevant subject teachers to discuss student progress.

Learning Support

Students who are selected for learning support are those who are within the average range of ability but have low levels of achievement in literacy or mathematics. These are students for whom differentiation within the mainstream classroom is not enough. The role of the learning support teacher is to provide additional support to students with such low achievement. Once the student is in attendance the learning support, the teacher and the student collaboratively establishes the student's learning needs and a programme to address these needs is put in place. There is on-going assessment of the student's progress and where sufficient progress is made the supplementary teaching is discontinued. As in every other step, intervention ceases only in consultation with parents/guardians and the student in question.

Guidance Counsellor

The Guidance Counsellor is very involved in the planning process for the provision of education for students with SEN and for their inclusion in the school. The Guidance Counsellor ensures that counselling and guidance for students with SEN, in accordance with their individual needs are included in the Guidance Plan.

The guidance counsellor liaises with the resource teacher/learning support teacher and is perpetually available in a consultative capacity.

The Guidance Counsellor has an important role to play in assisting students with SEN at the different stages of schooling – assisting them in the formal transfer from primary school to secondary school and from secondary school to further and higher education and training or to employment and in assisting them in making decisions about their future.

The Guidance Counsellor assists in making teachers aware of relevant information about students with SEN and advises on how these students can be helped in school. In this context, the confidentiality of sensitive information is strictly observed.

The Guidance Counsellor is available to meet parents/guardians of students with SEN by appointment to discuss their daughter's progress.

The Guidance Counsellor encourages and assists student with SEN to explore the full range of options open to them. Students with SEN and their parents/guardians are made aware by the Guidance Counsellor of Third Level Access Programmes and other progression routes to higher education.

Board of management

The overall responsibility for the provision of education to all students, including students with special educational needs lies with the board of management. The board facilitates the inclusion of students with SEN through an inclusive enrolment policy and by promoting inclusive whole-school policies and procedures. The board has the responsibility for overseeing the development, implementation and review of the school's policies and services in relation to the inclusion of students with special educational needs.

Principal

The principal has the overall responsibility for the development and implementation of inclusive school policies and procedures in relation to students with special educational needs. The principal works with the board of management, teachers and parents in the development, implementation and review of whole-school policies that promote the inclusion of students with SEN. The role of the principal also includes liaising with external agencies such as NEPS, NCSE, HSE and other local agencies.

Mainstream Teachers

Mainstream teachers have overall responsibility for ensuring that all students within their class groups, including those with SEN, are provided with a learning programme and environment that enables them to gain access to the curriculum and to advance their learning.

Mainstream teachers play a key role in bringing about the successful inclusion of students with SEN. They make a critical contribution through the creation of a supportive and caring environment in the school through which students with SEN are affirmed in their ability to learn and to participate generally in the life of the school.

Mainstream teachers use differentiated teaching as required in order to meet the individual needs of all students including those students with SEN. They provide suitable learning activities to enable students with SEN to attain their targets and adapt the content, methodologies and classroom materials to the needs of the students. Through strategic planning at subject department level and through liaison with the LST/RT, subject teachers help identify and develop strategies for teaching their specialist subjects to students with SEN. They use a balanced range of strategies, techniques and approaches in an effort to meet the student's learning requirements so that the student may receive the support necessary to reach her full potential.

In planning for differentiation, the mainstream teachers may collaborate with and seek advice and assistance from LST/RT and other members of the Learning Support Team as appropriate. When planning and teaching lessons, setting homework and formulating weekly or end of term tests for their class groupings, the mainstream teachers consider the needs of students with SEN.

Mainstream teachers play a central role in identifying students who may be at risk and for drawing the attention of other staff members to such students.

Where a teacher becomes concerned about a student's general progress, application, communication, behaviour, or interaction with other students, the teacher makes accommodations for the student within the class. Following implementation of these, if the concerns are not alleviated the teacher consults with other teachers such as the LST/ RT with a view to organising additional help where possible.

Mainstream teachers contribute to the review of the progress of these students by collaborating with the SEN support team. They keep parents/guardians informed of their progress through parent/teacher meetings and school reports and by being available to meet parents from time to time, as required.

Parents/Guardians

Article 42.1 of the Constitution of Ireland acknowledges that the family is the primary and natural educator of the child and recognises the rights of parents to provide for the religious, moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children. This school provides parents with relevant information about the enrolment policy, all policies in relation to special educational needs, facilities and provision. Parents are afforded the opportunity to visit the school prior to enrolling their daughter and are supported in their decision-making.

Parents provide valuable support to a child with SEN while the child is in transition from primary to post-primary level. They provide valuable information to the school in relation to the child's difficulties, learning differences and learning preferences. The school seeks relevant professional reports on students with special educational needs before the enrolment of such a child. This provision adds to the collaborative planning for a student with SEN.

Parents are required to give their consent when intervention is considered necessary or appropriate.

The EPSEN Act bestows a number of specific rights on parents in relation to their involvement in individual education plans for their children.

The school provides information to parents on the progress of the child throughout her schooling. Parents keep teachers informed of the progress or difficulties they observe in their child's learning. Parents also assist their child in showing interest in their school work and can assist them in the practice and reinforcement of new skills.

Special Needs Assistant

Special needs assistants are allocated to post-primary schools to provide care assistance to named students who have special educational needs. SNAs provide the necessary non-teaching services to students with assessed educational needs. Special needs assistants make a valuable contribution to the capacity of a school to provide inclusive education for students with SEN. They work closely with teachers in providing assistance to students in the areas of personal care, supporting mobility or supervising work or recreation activities. When an SNA is engaged in assisting a student or group of students in relation to a particular task, it takes place in accordance with the directions of the teacher who has assigned the task. The duties and conditions of service attaching to the post of SNA are set out in Circular SNA 12/05.

Bodies outside School

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

The Education Act created the framework for the establishment of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) whose function is to advise the minister on all curricular and assessment matters for the primary and post-primary schools.

To fulfil its remit in advising on the curriculum and syllabus requirements of students with a disability or other special educational needs it has developed a suite of materials "Draft Guidelines for Teachers of Students with general Learning Disabilities (2002). The draft guidelines show how the primary school curriculum and the post-primary school curriculum can be differentiated to meet the learning needs of students with severe, profound, moderate or mild general learning disabilities

Department of Education and Skills

The DES has overall responsibility for providing a high quality education that will enable individuals including those with SEN to achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society. It provides resources and support services to the school to make possible the provision of appropriate education to all students, including those with SEN.

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

The NCSE co-ordinates the provision of education and related support services for students with SEN. It is the responsibility of the NCSE to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs and to make available to the parents of children with special educational needs information in relation to their entitlements and the entitlements of their children.

Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO)

The SENO is responsible for co-ordinating and facilitating the delivery of educational services to the students with disabilities. The NCSE, through the SENO, is responsible for processing the applications for resources.

The SENO makes decisions on applications and co-ordinates the allocation to the school of additional resources to facilitate the education and inclusion of students with SEN. These resources include resource teachers, special needs assistants, assistive technology and special transport.

The SENO liaises with the school in relation to identifying an appropriate setting for an individual student with SEN and in relation to establishing special classes for students in particular categories of SEN.

Special Education Support Service (SESS)

The SESS co-ordinates, develops and provides a range of professional development courses and support structures for members of staff in relation to the education of children with SEN. It provides direct support for individual teachers, support to groups of teachers or whole staff and expert support on particular aspects of special needs on request.

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

The NEPS plays a supportive role in promoting and facilitating the inclusion of students with SEN. The educational psychologist works in partnership with teachers, parents and students and provides support in relation to learning, behaviour and social and emotional development.

Early in the school year, the educational psychologist meets members of the Special Educational Needs Support Team (LST, RT, GC, Principal/DP to discuss the learning support and resource programme and to deal with concerns that may arise.

The educational psychologist, when required, provides advice to teachers and parents/guardians. He/she carries out individual psychological assessment of

students, when deemed necessary, with the prior consent of parents/guardians and the student.

The educational psychologist assists the school in developing effective interventions for individual students with SEN and liaises with other professionals outside the school on behalf of the student when deemed necessary or appropriate.

TÚSLA (National Education Welfare Board)

The NEWB was established under the Education (Welfare) Act (2000). The main function of the NEWB is ensuring that each child attends a recognised school or otherwise receives an appropriate education. It aims to promote and foster in society and families recognition of the importance of education in the lives of children.

A list of functions of the NEWB is set out in Section 10 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000)

The Health Service Executive

Under the Education for Persons with Special Educational needs Act (2004) responsibilities are devolved on the health boards (HSE) for providing services, including assessment services to children up to the age of eighteen.

Practices and Procedures in St. Joseph's

Learning Support

- On enrolment day, parents/guardians are asked to indicate on the enrolment form if their daughter has been or is receiving learning support or if she has been assessed for a specific learning difficulty or learning disability. The SEN co-ordinator is available on that day to meet parents/guardians whose daughters are receiving learning support in primary school.
- Following the administration of the CAT 4 tests, the Guidance Counsellor and SEN co-ordinator meet to ascertain which first year students may need learning support. The co-ordinator consults with the student's subject teachers, especially English and Maths teachers.
- Further information from subject teachers/year heads/class tutors/ guidance counsellor/ parents feeds into this system throughout the year
- At the beginning of the school year, teachers are briefed on students who experience learning difficulties so as to facilitate the teaching and learning process in the mainstream classroom. Where a student is identified as

needing extra help to support their learning in the classroom the co-ordinator informs the parents/guardians and offers learning support as far as is practicable. Once consent to proceed is received from parents the learning support is put in place.

Following consultation with parents/guardians, students themselves, subject teachers and Guidance Counsellor, students are withdrawn from class. Mindful of students' socialisation as well as their academic development the LS teacher organises the withdrawal of students from mainstream classes. Learning support in English or Maths is offered on a one-to-one basis or in small groups twice weekly through the following arrangements:

- Withdrawal from Irish, where a student has an exemption
- Withdrawal from a second foreign language class or a subject not included in their option choice for second year
- Withdrawal from another class with the subject teacher's and parents'/guardians' agreement. This method necessitates a commitment from the student to catch up on class work and homework missed during the agreed class period.

Additional resource teaching and learning support is currently being provided by seven members of the teaching staff. The principal allocates this provision.

Early in the school year a meeting is arranged with the Educational Psychologist and co-ordinator to discuss the learning support and resource programme/schedule and to deal with concerns that may arise. The co-ordinator and guidance counsellor meet as necessary to review the students' progress, to plan for the progression through junior cycle/senior cycle and to discuss areas of concern. They also liaise with the class teacher and principal/deputy principal. There is further regular informal contact between guidance counsellor, resource teacher/learning support teacher and subject teachers.

Parents of children receiving extra educational support are encouraged to communicate with the LST /RT and Guidance Counsellor at parent/teacher meetings or at another time convenient to both.

There are two learning support rooms equipped with computers, internet access and resources.

Review and Evaluation

This Special Education Needs policy is a work in progress and will be adapted as necessary on an on-going basis. An in-depth formal review of the policy will take place every two years by the S.E.N. team

Consultation with education Partners

This policy is to be presented to staff and parents/guardians by senior management.

Monitoring and Review

This policy was Reviewed and Ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on the 21st September 2017. This policy is operational from the 22nd September 2017.

Mr. John Caulfield
Chairperson of Board of Management

Ms. Marie Mac Cabe
Principal