

**S.N. Iorball Sionnaigh**

**Polasaí Scoile**

**Ar**

**Riachtanais Speisialta**

## **S.N. Iorball Sionnaigh**

### **Special Needs Policy**

This policy was first drawn up during Autumn 2002/03 and involved consultations with Miss M. Corr, Infant class teacher and member of the Board of Management, Gearóid Mac Thaidhg, Principal, Mrs. Kathy Shevlin, Secretary Parents Association and parent of special needs pupil, Mrs. Philomena Mulligan, parent of special needs pupil, and Mr. and Mrs. X. McKenna, parents of special needs pupil, Mr. Frank King, travelling /visiting teacher for the deaf, and Ann Finn, N.E.P.S.

#### **Rationale**

It was necessary to devise a policy on special needs at this time because for the first time we were faced with the scenario where parents of pupils with special needs were seeking to enrol their pupils in mainstream classes in this school. It is also designed to assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child in our school, while endeavouring to comply with legislation regarding school planning.

#### **Inclusion**

We are fully committed to the principle of inclusion and the good practice, which makes it possible. Our policy, as set out in this document, aims to enable children with SEN, traveller children and children whose first language is not English, to become fully integrated members of our school community. This will be achieved by careful consideration of the needs of each child and by either modifying activities or by providing support that will help the child to participate in them.

#### **Three Principles for Inclusion**

##### **Setting Suitable Learning Challenges**

We aim to give every child the opportunity to experience success in learning and to achieve as high a standard as possible.

### **Responding to Children's Diverse Learning Needs**

We take into account the different backgrounds, experiences, interests and strengths that influence the way in which children learn when we plan our approaches to teaching and learning.

### **Overcoming Potential Barriers to Learning and Assessment for Individuals and Groups of Children**

We recognise that a minority of children will have particular learning and assessment requirements that will create barriers to learning if we do not address them through special arrangements.

### **In making provision for children with special needs our policy objectives are:**

- To ensure that our duties, as set out in The Education Act 1998, Equal Status Act 2000, Education Welfare Act 2000 and Education for Persons with Disabilities Act 2004, are fully met, to enable children with special educational needs to join in the normal activities of the school along with children who do not have special educational needs
- To ensure that all children gain access to a broad and balanced curriculum and have an equal opportunity to receive an education that is appropriate to their needs
- To identify and assess children with special needs as early as possible
- To use our resources as efficiently and equitably as possible when assessing and meeting the special educational needs of our children
- To provide a graduated approach in order to match educational provision to children's needs
- To develop a partnership with parents/carers in order that their knowledge, views and experience can assist us in assessing and providing for their children
- To take into account the ascertainable wishes of the children concerned and, whenever possible, directly involve them in decision making in order to provide more effectively for them
- To ensure collaboration with the Department of Education & Skills in order to take effective action on behalf of children with special needs

## Aims:

By drawing up this policy we hope to

- (a) Outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to pupils with special needs and in particular their induction.
- (b) Outline our whole school approach to teaching/learning in relation to pupils with special needs
- (c) To enable pupils with disabilities to share with their peers as complete an educational experience as is possible.
- (d) Establish communication structures for the involvement of parents of pupils with special needs.
- (e) To define the role of the Special Needs Assistant.

## Policy Content

As we support the principles of Inclusivity and Equality as part of our general school philosophy, all pupils, irrespective of their ability/disability will be afforded the opportunity of experiencing all areas of the primary curriculum. By so doing we will endeavour to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the classroom and the school in general. The relevant teachers will endeavour to assist this integration through a variety of strategies such as use of the buddy system, exercises from the S.P.H.E. programme, involvement in class plays, drama, games, P.E. classes, class choirs and circle time. Further strategies aimed at enabling the pupil to participate in the learning of his/her peers will include participation in oral work activities, participating in activities of mixed ability groups, participation in circle time, the use of concrete materials, particularly in the area of numeracy. To ensure continuity from one class level to another all staff members are made aware of the various strategies being employed to integrate pupils with special educational needs.

## Enrolment

Prior to enrolment an earnest effort will be made to gather as much information as possible regarding the pupil's special needs. This will

involve meetings between the principal, class teacher, resource teacher and the parents of the special needs pupil. The principal will request that he is furnished with all reports and assessments that concern the pupil, from Psychologists, Psychiatrists, family G.P., Speech Therapists, and Paediatricians etc. On the basis of these reports and meetings with all those involved in the pupil's condition the school will endeavour to establish the pupil's requirements and our capacity and ability to meet these needs. In accordance with our enrolment policy, where it is deemed that further resources are required to meet the needs of the special pupil, a request will be made, prior to enrolment, to the Department of Education and Science, for the provision of the necessary resources as outlined in the psychological or medical reports. These resources may include, for example, access to or provision of any, or a combination of, the following: Visiting teacher service, the provision of a Special Needs Assistant, specialised equipment, furniture or transport service. The Board of Management reserves the right to defer the enrolment of the special needs pupil pending

- (a) The receipt of all relevant reports and assessments and
- (b) The provision of appropriate resources by the Department of Education and Science to meet the needs specified in the psychological and/or medical reports C.F. School Enrolment Policy.

### Communication

The parents will be kept fully and honestly informed regarding their child's progress from the day of induction and this will be done on a regular basis through meetings with the class teacher, the resource teacher and the principal, and also on an informal basis when meeting with the class teacher in the morning or at dispersal time. Through these contacts the parents will be advised of the strategies being adopted by the relevant teachers within the classroom and support teacher room, and they will be further advised of the manner in which they can support the learning of the child in the home. If there are health and safety issues arising from the enrolment of a special needs pupil an effort will be made to identify same from the outset and strategies put in place to address our concerns. Examples of areas which may need to be addressed are

- (a) Access to the school itself and access to classrooms, P.E. hall, library, toilets etc.

- (b) Supervision at all times but particularly at break times and where the pupil is involved in extra-curricular activities.
- (c) Administration of medicines. In this regard staff will be guided by our school policy regarding Administration of medicines, C.F. same.
- (d) Involvement in Physical Education and usage of P.E. equipment.

Procedure for early identification, screening and referral of special needs pupils from within the school shall include a combination of the following strategies

- (a) Teacher observations and running records
- (b) B.I.A.P.
- (c) M.I.S.T
- (d) N.R.I.T.
- (e) N.A.R.A.
- (f) Maths Tracker
- (g) Language Link Screener (Selection of these)
- (f) Standardised tests such as Micra-T and Drumcondra tests.

Where it is thought that the pupil is experiencing difficulties this will be brought to the attention of the principal who will discuss same with the class teacher, the learning support teacher and the resource teacher. Following on from this the class teacher will contact the parents to inform them of our concerns, if this is deemed necessary. The parents may be advised of the need to involve outside agencies, such as psychologists, psychiatrists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, paediatricians, etc.

Within the school a Three Stage approach shall operate

Stage One: Access to the school's broad and balanced curriculum is achieved for most children by the differentiation of class work by the class teacher. A class teacher may identify a pupil as having SEN which requires intervention.

The triggers for this intervention could be;

- The child makes little or no progress even when teaching approaches are directed at an identified area of weakness
- The child shows signs of difficulty in developing literacy and numeracy skills, which result in poor attainment

- Persistent emotional or behavioural difficulties which do not respond to behaviour management techniques used by the school
- Has sensory or physical difficulties
- Has communication and/or relationship difficulties

Following discussions between the class teacher and the parents, where concerns are shared and recorded, ideas discussed, the class teacher will draw up a simple plan for this pupil, outlining what the teacher, parents and child will do. The success of this plan is reviewed in a given time frame. If concern remains after a term, or possibly two, then the class teacher will request the involvement of the learning support teacher, after acquiring the consent of the parents. If it is deemed appropriate, the pupil moves to stage 2.

Stage 2: The class teacher, the learning support teacher and the parents will re-assess the child's needs and an I.P.L.P is drawn up.

- The class teacher and support teacher will differentiate the curriculum in specific areas with achievable goals to be implemented by the class teacher and support teacher
- If there are others in the class with similar difficulties in one or more of the specific areas, then a group educational plan will be implemented
- These programmes will be reviewed and updated every term
- While efforts will be made to allow the SEN group/individual to remain included in class, there may be a need to work part of the programme in a SEN room with the support teacher or class teacher. This withdrawal will be time limited and for specific purposes only.
- Where progress is such that the child is no longer giving cause for concern, the child will revert to the usual differentiated curriculum available to all children.

Persistent or ongoing concerns after these adaptations to learning may require stage 3 intervention at this stage, additional support may be requested, such as our educational psychologist. However the input from the Educational Psychologist at this stage may merely involve informal consultation and advice on appropriate school assessment, interventions and resource materials. After a period of at least one term, the plan is reviewed and modified as appropriate. If, at this stage, significant concerns remain, the principal, learning support teacher and classroom teacher consult the parents

regarding decision to request assessment. A referral and parental consent form must be completed before involving the Educational Psychologist in a formal way.

**Stage 3:** When it has been identified that a child is still struggling and performing below the 12th percentile despite school action, the class teacher with the support teacher and Principal will seek advice, in consultation with the child's parents.

1. A psychological assessment will be arranged (see Education for Persons with Disability Act 2004)
2. Other outside agencies may need to be contacted, who will advise on a range of provision including IEP targets and strategies
3. The triggers for intervention for Resource could be that, despite receiving an individualised programme the child;
  - a. Makes little or no progress over a long period of time
  - b. Continues to work at Primary Curriculum levels substantially below that of children of a similar age
  - c. Continues to have literacy and numeracy difficulties
  - d. Has emotional or behavioural difficulties which substantially and regularly interfere with the child's learning, or that of other children, despite an appropriate behaviour management programme and IEP
  - e. Has sensory and/or physical needs, and requires additional specialist equipment or regular visits from an advisory service
  - f. Has an ongoing communication or relationship difficulty that prevents social development, and act as a barrier to learning.

The school, through the principal, requests a consultation with and referral to the psychological service. At this stage the psychologist will attend a consultation meeting with the relevant staff members, the principal, the parents and possibly other relevant professionals (child care). A new cycle of consultation, assessment, planning, involving all concerned, begins. Following on from this a detailed I.E.P., identifying agreed interventions and actions, is drawn up. The support teacher, the mainstream class teacher and SNA where applicable, in consultation with the parents will contribute to the development of an I.E.P. for the special needs pupil. The plan will lay out specified content and well defined aims and objectives.



This plan includes:

- The nature and degree of the child's abilities and skills
- The degree of the child's special needs
- The present level of performance
- Services to be provided
- Services for transition to 2<sup>nd</sup> level school where appropriate
- The goals, which the child is to achieve over a period of half a year.

The process which is put into operation will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. Decisions with regard to support and allocation of resources may be made at this stage if appropriate. The psychologist will contribute to the process of information gathering, feedback, intervention and review over time. It is during this process that a formal psychological assessment may take place. It is very important that the strict procedures for requesting psychologist involvement are rigidly adhered to. In the event of parents refusing to agree to an assessment by the psychologist, the principal will request the parents to submit their refusal in writing.

When the SEN of the child has been confirmed by the psychologist, if it is felt by the psychologist that a child has care needs, a special needs assistant may be applied for.

In circumstances where a child uses specialised equipment, consultants will be required to demonstrate how the equipment is to be used.

The use of specialised yard equipment may also need to be demonstrated to staff members. Courses will be provided on an ongoing basis to train staff in the relevant areas

If the psychologist recommends an exemption from Irish, the Principal will see to this under guidance from the Department of Education & Skills.

### School Intervention Programmes

Support teaching in our school is currently provided by the Special Education teachers (SET)

- The support teacher provides support usually in small groups of two, three or four. The support teacher also supports the class teacher through intervention and group work within the classroom. In the case of special needs pupils where assistance may be sanctioned on an

individual basis, staff in such a situation should work in a classroom with glass in the door, thus rendering the occupants visible at all times.

At all times we are conscious of the fact that the mainstream class teacher has primary responsibility for the pupils' learning and in consultation with the support teachers will devise strategies to accommodate access to all areas of the curriculum in a meaningful manner.

Arrangements will be made to review the plan and its progress on a regular basis, at least on a termly basis.

The support teacher, following consultation with the class teacher, will draw up a timetable for support teaching. This timetable will make allowance for time to be spent in planning, assessing and recording. It will be important to review intervention programmes for pupils with special needs at the end of each term and the support teachers, following consultation with the principal, shall acquire resources/materials which they feel are beneficial and essential to support special needs pupils, in so far as our school budget allows for same. The support teachers are supported and encouraged to avail of all professional development opportunities that arise in the area of special needs – particularly facilitating their attendance at any meetings, workshops, lectures or courses.

#### Role and Duties of Special Needs Assistant SNA

- (1) The SNA will provide general assistance to the class teacher in dealing with the special needs pupil. The assistance sought shall be at the discretion of the principal and the class teacher.
- (2) All duties carried out by the SNA shall be of a non-teaching nature
- (3) Under no circumstances shall a SNA be left in sole charge of a class.
- (4) Duties shall be modified to support the particular needs of the pupil where the SNA has been appointed to cater for a specific pupil.
- (5) The SNA shall assist in supervision during assembly, dispersal and most importantly at recreational periods.
- (6) The SNA shall accompany the pupil on visits to the learning support/resource teacher.

- (7) The SNA shall assist on out of school visits, walks and similar activities.
- (8) The SNA shall assist pupils to board and alight from the school bus.
- (9) The SNA shall provide assistance in preparation and tidying up of the classroom as well as providing assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene.
- (10) In relation to Intimate Care Policy and Toileting clear and concise guidelines regarding procedure shall be drawn up by the
  - (a) Board of Management
  - (b) Principal
  - (c) Staff dealing with the special needs pupil
  - (d) The parents.

It is essential that there is agreement and understanding in this regard.

- (11) It is imperative that the SNA is familiar with school policies but especially
  1. Health and Safety
  2. Code of Behaviour and Discipline
  3. Supervision
  4. Fire Drill
  5. Anti-Bullying
  6. Reporting of abuse suspicions/allegations to School Liaison Officer
  7. Administration of medicines
  8. Pertinent Curriculum Policy: E.G. Handwriting Scheme.
12. The SNA is only entitled to be given information as pertains to her/his job.
13. The SNA is not entitled to ask questions or be given information about other children.
14. The SNA shall assist in areas of curriculum, social and personal development and care needs.

15. It is important to avoid the 'Velcro' model of SNA and to assign broader responsibility in the class and to promote the pupil's independence.
16. The SNA need not necessarily have to be an expert in special education in order to be a good assistant.
17. It is very important that the SNA uses appropriate language in relation to the pupil's disability and in so doing provides a good role model for others.
18. It is essential that the class teacher and SNA work in collaboration. To this end there is a need for clear communication, trust and mutual respect, and shared values and goals. The goal of this collaborative effort is to assist the pupil to achieve full potential in all areas of development.
19. It is of the utmost importance that the responsibilities of the teacher, the principal, the SNA and the parent are clearly understood and boundaries must not become blurred.
20. The SNA should be aware that they can influence the culture of 'inclusion' in a school by modelling inclusive attitudes towards children with disabilities.
- (21) The SNA needs to be fully aware of the school procedure for reporting suspicions of child abuse. In our school this is done through the principal alone.
- (22) The SNA shall be included in any in-service courses relating to child protection or The Stay Safe Programme.
- (23) The SNA shall be aware of the importance of engaging orally with the pupil in a manner that enhances communication skills.
- (24) It is important that the SNA is aware of the range of school schemes and policies relating to aspects of the curriculum and the progression through the school of those policies in order to ensure that when assisting children they use the same approaches as the teacher.

## Integration

It is envisaged that through implementation of our SPHE programme the special needs pupil will be assisted in successfully integrating into our school community. In delivery of our RSE programme cognisance will be taken of the maturity level of our pupils.

## Record Keeping

A record of support is added to Databiz by the SET of each pupil who receives support by them, for how long and date of re-entry to full class situation.

All pupils who are withdrawn for support will have a folder pertaining to them. This file will hold work samples and test result for that child. This will be compiled by the SET and kept in the SET room.

A file containing all the relevant information pertaining to the special needs pupils with a professional diagnosis is secured in the principal's office. All teachers dealing with the special needs pupil have access to his/her file as do assistants from outside agencies – therapists, visiting teachers etc – on receipt of parental consent. Contributions from psychologists, health care workers, teachers, assistants may be added to this file during the pupil's life in this school.

## Success Criteria

While we accept that it can be quite difficult in the initial stages to assess success, the following yardsticks will be of benefit to us

1. Parental desire for inclusion of pupil with special needs into our school.
2. The obvious progress of integration of the special needs pupil and his/her interaction with peers.
3. Feedback from classroom teacher, support teacher, classroom assistant, psychologist, speech and occupational therapists, visiting teachers, the pupil and parents.
4. Teacher assessments and tests and teacher observations.

## **Complaints**

If parents have a complaint about the Special Education provision made, then they should in the first instance make an appointment to speak to the teacher and then the Principal.

The complaint will be investigated and dealt with as early as possible. If the matter is not resolved to the parents' satisfaction, then the matter proceeds to the BoM.

Our policy has applied from September 2003, but it is developmental and continually evolving. The operation of our policy is an ongoing process and will undoubtedly need to be amended from time to time, having regard for Department of Education and Skills circulars, Guidelines from N.C.C.A., the appointment of Special Educational Needs Organisers and the National Council for Special Education ( NCSE) .

This policy has been updated by Nuala Mhic Gabhainn, Marie Mc Kenna, Bernie Mc Aree and Carol Keyes in Spring 2016 and ratified by the Board of Management on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

Following a few slight changes, this was ratified by the Board of Management on October 13<sup>th</sup> 2016.

Further changes in light of the new allocation system were made and this policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson