

# Special Educational Needs and Learning Support Policy

## St. Mary's College Junior School

### Review September 2018

#### **Introduction**

St. Mary's College Junior School, under the patronage of the Spiritan Education Trust, is an Independent Junior School, catering for a cross section of children. The purpose of this SEN and Learning Support policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other interested parties on the provision of effective learning support to pupils experiencing low achievement and / or learning difficulties, and to take in to account those children who are ahead of their peers, as well as to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act 1998.

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

- ❑ One Learning Support Teacher
- ❑ One Resource Teacher
- ❑ 1 socialisation class

#### **Implementation and Review**

The implementation of this Policy will commence in September 2018. It will be reviewed as circumstances may warrant.

#### **Communication**

This policy will be available on our school web site or on request.

**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.

To ensure no child "falls through the net."

To provide intervention as **early** as possible

To direct the resources of the school towards those most in need

#### **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
- ❑ Assessment and intervention at 2<sup>nd</sup> class level in our school to continue through to 6<sup>th</sup> class where time and resources allow

- ❑ Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need in lower classes

### **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, e.g. phonological awareness, and to the teaching of other aspects of English
- ❑ The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to Numeracy and Literacy.
- ❑ Promotion of parental understanding and involvement through their attendance at an induction meeting for the parents of incoming boys, the arrangement of formal and informal Parent-Teacher Meetings, as well as ongoing collaboration with the Parents' Association
- ❑ Implementation of a guided Reading Programme from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class.
- ❑ Class based early intervention by the Learning Support Teacher from 2nd class resulting in the provision of additional individualised/group support.
- ❑ Ongoing observation and assessment of pupils by the Class Teacher.

### **Selection of Pupils for Learning Support**

- ❑ The principle of Early Intervention applies, therefore pupils from 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class are given priority when hours are being allocated. We will also do our best within our resources to look after those who need support in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes.
- ❑ From second class upwards, all pupils are screened annually, using appropriate standardised tests.
- ❑ Priority for Learning Support is given to those pupils who perform at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> Percentile in the lower classes.
- ❑ In the case of pupils performing at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile, the screening process is followed by a consultative meeting between the Class Teacher, the Learning Support Teacher, the Principal and the parents concerning the pupil's performance.
- ❑ In the allocation of places for Learning Support, the following are prioritised:
  1. Second class identified by the Class Teacher, through Teacher Observation and other screening instruments, as having difficulty in literacy
  2. Children 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> class, at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile in literacy
  3. Children from 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> class at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile in literacy
  4. Children from second and 3<sup>rd</sup> class, at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile in numeracy
  5. Children from 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class, at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile in numeracy

**If** the timetable allows, children from 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes who are below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile will also receive support and fairness to all will be ensured i.e. all children, who require intervention, should have the opportunity to avail of resource hours.

**It is important that all 6<sup>th</sup> class boys are prepared for secondary school and supervised independent learning is encouraged thus making the transition to Senior School more effective.**

### **Provision of Supplementary Teaching**

- ❑ The primary work of the Learning Support Teachers is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils identified above
- ❑ One to one teaching may be provided where small group teaching has not been effective
- ❑ A system of withdrawal and/or in-class support will operate in response to the needs of the individual pupil
- ❑ The Class Teacher and the Learning Support Teacher will meet to devise an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Group Education Plan (GEP), in consultation with the Principal

and parents. The pupil involved can also contribute to setting their own short-term targets

- ❑ If the pupil is in receipt of support from a Resource Teacher to address other needs, e.g. behavioural problems, sensory difficulty, it may be appropriate for the child to avail of a physical exercise/movement programme as time and resources allow. (Proprioceptive Activity )
- ❑ The Learning Support Teachers will maintain the following documentation in individualised files:
  1. Individual Profile and Learning programme
  2. Short term planning and programme record
  3. Samples of written work
  4. Reading analysis records.

### **Individual Learning Plan / Group Education Plan**

The Individual Learning Plan / Group Education Plan will address the pupils' full range of needs and will include:

- ❑ Details from the 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 – as required

Each plan will be monitored through teacher observation; the keeping of planning and progress records and through the pupil's own feedback. Parents' feedback is also required.

A detailed review will take place, at the beginning of each year and the beginning of each term. The Learning Support Teacher, the Class Teacher and Principal will **reallocate hours** to ensure all children are catered for equally.

### **Timetabling**

- ❑ The provision of Learning Support is in addition to the regular class teaching in English and Maths
- ❑ Effort is made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curriculum each time they attend Learning Support. A flexible approach to timetabling is adopted by the Class Teacher, though class disruption must be minimised.
- ❑ 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 the Learning Support Teacher.

### **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 experience, reading attainment, phonological awareness and Maths attainment.
- ❑ Following consultation between the Learning Support Teacher, funding for materials may be provided from class/school, or the Board of Management
- ❑ Learning Support resources will be primarily used in the learning Support Rooms. These resources may be made available to Class Teachers following consultation with the Learning Support Teacher.

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

- ❑ In general, children should not stay for more than 2 years in Supplementary Teaching/learning support unless they are still at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> Percentile and as long as resources allow as the child proceeds to higher classes.
- ❑ Following the end of the review as detailed above, a decision is made to continue/discontinue the provision of Supplementary Teaching/learning support
- ❑ The decision making process involves consultation between the Class Teacher, the Learning Support Teacher, and the Principal, and **account is also taken of the overall Learning Support demands in the school. Parents will be made aware of any changes made and reasons given.**

### **The criteria on which the decision will be made include:**

Fairness to all

A consideration as to whether the pupil has achieved some/all of the learning targets set

A consideration as to whether the pupil will be able to cope independently/semi independently in the classroom learning context

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

### **Referral to out of School Agencies**

- ❑ The Learning Support Teacher co-ordinates the referral of pupils to outside agencies, e.g. Educational Psychologist
- ❑ The Principal and/or Learning Support Teacher 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 Learning Support Teacher as appropriate, and the assessment is conducted
- ❑ This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed.

### **Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

Learning Support is a collaborative responsibility shared by all partners in the learning experiences. It is important that all partners (The Board, Principal, Learning support Team, Parents and children) contribute in the planning and implementation of our school plan on learning support.

### **Board of Management**

The role of the Board of Management is to:

Monitor the development and implementation of the school's policy on Learning Support

- ❑ Oversee the development, implementation and review of the provision of Learning Support in the school
- ❑ Ensure adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the Learning Support Teachers
- ❑ Provide a secure facility for storage of records in relation to pupils in receipt of Learning Support (GDPR)
- ❑ Budget for ongoing support for Professional Development in Learning Support for staff.

### **Principal**

The role of the principal is to:

- ❑ Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policy on Learning Support in co-operation with the Board of Management, Teachers, parents and children
- ❑ Work with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan on learning support in the context of Special Needs Education
- ❑ Monitor the implementation of the school plan on Learning Support on an ongoing basis
- ❑ Monitor the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with lowest levels of achievement
- ❑ Assume direct responsibility for co-ordination learning support in the context of Special Needs Services e.g. Educational Psychologist
- ❑ Oversee 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
- ❑ Keep teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedure to be followed in initiation referrals which will be done by Ms. Murray.
- ❑ Help teachers increase their knowledge and skills in the area of learning support and providing CPD.

### **Class Teacher**

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching. In supporting the development and implementation of the school plan on Learning Support, the class teacher should:

- ❑ Implement teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all pupils and to the greatest extent possible prevent the emergence of learning difficulties
- ❑ Implement the school policies on screening and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in English and Maths by co-operating and assisting with the administration and scoring of appropriate screening measures
- ❑ For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, to collaborate with the Learning Support Teacher in the development of an individual profile and learning programme by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve these targets
- ❑ Weekly plan of work in English and Maths to be provided to the Learning Support Teacher in advance.

With regard to teaching pupils with low achievement, the following general approaches and methods are recommended:

- ❑ Such children should be prioritised when accessing information from previous class teacher
- ❑ Priority when establishing parental contact
- ❑ Group teaching
- ❑ Modify presentation and questioning techniques to maximise the involvement of pupils with low achievement in class activities
- ❑ Placing emphasis on oral language development across the curriculum
- ❑ Providing pupils with extra tutoring in the key basic skills in literacy and numeracy
- ❑ Setting learning targets at an appropriate level
- ❑ Providing learning activities and material which are suitably challenging but which also ensure success and progress
- ❑ Carrying out error analyses of a pupil's work to pinpoint specific areas of difficulty
- ❑ Setting up 'buddy systems' in class (high achievers collaboratively working with low achievers, e.g. peer tutoring / paired reading)
- ❑ Applying assessments and tests which offer challenge and opportunities for success to children of all levels of achievement.

A key role of successful Learning Support is a very high level of consultation and co-operation between the Class Teacher and the Learning Support Teacher. Central to this consultation is the development, implementation and review **of Individual Profile and Learning Programmes**

### **Learning Support Teacher**

The role of the Learning Support Teacher is to:

- ❑ Develop an individual profile and learning programme for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with the Class Teacher and parents
- ❑ Maintain and planning and progress record or equivalent for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of Learning Support
- ❑ Provide teaching in English and Maths to pupils in the school who experience low achievement, in accordance with the school's selection criteria
- ❑ Contribute to the development of policy on Learning Support at whole school level
- ❑ Provide advice to the Class Teachers in such areas as individual pupils assessment and programme planning, as well as approaches to language development, reading, writing and mathematics for pupils experiencing difficulties
- ❑ Contribute at school level to decision making regarding the purchase of learning resource books and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms and in the Learning Support room
- ❑ Perform a defined role in co-ordinating the provision of Special Needs and Learning Support services in the school
- ❑ Liaise with external agencies such as psychologist to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs
- ❑ Maintain a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and special education support
- ❑ Track the progress of pupils who have discontinued Learning Support.

### **Parents**

The role of parents supporting the Learning Support for their children is vital to its success. Specifically, parents contribute through:

- ❑ Regular communication with the Class Teacher and Learning Support Teacher
- ❑ Creating a home environment where literacy can thrive
- ❑ Fostering positive attitudes about school and learning in the child
- ❑ Participation in shared reading programme
- ❑ Encouraging the child to visit library
- ❑ Developing the child's oral language
- ❑ Developing the child's social mathematics

### **Communication Strategies**

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

- ❑ Class Teacher and the Learning Support Teacher following a low score on a screening test
- ❑ 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 of further diagnostic assessment and/or provision of supplementary teaching
- ❑ Regular communication between the Learning Support Teacher and the Class Teacher, through the weekly completion of the *Classroom Work Schedule in English and Maths* and the participation in formal and informal meetings
- ❑ Regular communication between the Learning Support Teacher and parents

### **Success Criteria**

The school wide implementation of this policy will result in enhancement of pupils 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 pupil's progress

## Resource Teaching Policy

### Entitlement to Resource Teaching

When a child continues to experience difficulty and is not making progress above the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile in literacy and numeracy, the child will normally be referred for psychological assessment, in consultation with parents, and may then be supported by a Resource Teacher.

Pupils who display major behavioural or emotional difficulties may be referred for assessment and **may** be allocated resource hours where resources allow.

Children with learning difficulties who are integrated into mainstream education may also be allocated resource time.

Children who have physical difficulties, e.g. deafness, sight impairment, cerebral palsy are usually allocated resource hours.

Children in the lower class groups will have first call on resources within our school

Children in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes will access learning support as far as the school resources allow.

**Children with specific learning/co-ordination problems will benefit from classes with our P.E. teacher as and when the timetable allows.**

E.G Dyspraxia

**Occupational therapy** can help with things like balance and coordination. ...

Perceptual motor training is a set of exercises that some therapists use and recommend.

### **Role of Class Teacher, Parents, Principal, Board of Management**

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

## Integration of Children with a Disability and/or Special Education Needs in St. Mary's College Junior School

### **Enrolment of children with a disability and/or special education need**

Application for all children, including children with a disability and/or other special education needs, is governed at all times by the school's current Enrolment Policy.. However, the attention of parents of children with a disability and/or other special education needs is also drawn to the following points:

- ❑ St. Mary's College Junior School is an Independent mainstream school, and has higher pupil/teacher ratios such as those that apply in 'special' schools
- ❑ In general, the teachers in our school are trained and qualified to teach in mainstream education. They do not, in general, have any Special Education Needs Teacher Training, experience, or Qualifications, such as teachers in special schools have

- ❑ While pupils with special needs can be integrated into a mainstream class, and may be supported by a Special Needs Assistant and Resource teaching, this is not the same as the intensive one to one teaching s/he would enjoy in a special school
- ❑ An ordinary mainstream school does not have ancillary services enjoyed by special schools, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and as an Independent School, we may not avail of SENs.
- ❑ The school does not currently have facilities specially adapted for pupils with physical disability, although the school is fully committed to the provision of these, should any pupil need same, **subject to funding**
- ❑ A child with special needs integrated into an ordinary mainstream class will by the nature of such integration experience the normal day to day happenings, determined by the reality of school life, and the existing customs and practices. Every child in the school, including those with a disability and /or special educational needs is bound by school policies both in existence and those developed from time to time by the Staff and Board of Management. **The school cannot offer any additional tuition, support and supervision beyond that which is offered to any other pupil in the school, at times other than when the school is in operation during the normal school year.**
- ❑ The Class Teacher, Resource Teacher (if any) and Special Needs Assistant (if any) will periodically be required to participate at Staff Development and Curriculum Training Courses, Such professional development events take place within the existing school year, and all the children, including pupils with a disability and/or special educational needs are in the care of their parents at the times. Such extraordinary closures will be notified to parents.
- ❑ A child with a disability and/or special educational needs integrated into an ordinary mainstream class will not have any separate or additional provisions put into place from his peers in the event of staff illness, absences or whole school events
- ❑ From year to year the allocation of teachers to classes is focused on the needs of the whole school, and consequently the school cannot guarantee long term continuity or predictability in personnel. Children will benefit from our resources as they allow. A close level of co-operation is required between parents, the Class Teacher, and any other school personnel assigned to support the child.
- ❑ To enable us to provide the best services for the pupil, and to access any additional support/s that may be available, we require parents to supply the school with copies of the most recent psychological and medical reports prior to enrolment. These will be treated in the utmost confidence at all times
- ❑ Copies of all relevant assessments and reports should be supplied to the school as these become available, on an ongoing basis
- ❑ An assurance from parents that they understand that our responsibility as a school is primarily to **ALL** the children in our care, and that therefore if it becomes apparent to either/both the teachers and parents that the integration of an individual child with a disability and/or special educational needs is having an ongoing detrimental effect on the education of the other children in the class or school, the Board of Management reserves the right to review the enrolment of the individual child.

### **Specific Language Disorder**

Children with specific language disorders present with speech and language difficulties where skills are not developing in line with expected developmental sequence. These children may exhibit:

- ❑ Difficulty in understanding what is said to them
- ❑ Difficulty in expressing needs, thoughts and feelings, in developing vocabulary and using well formed sentences
- ❑ Poor concentration and listening skills, often preventing progress in the classroom
- ❑ Poor motor control which may affect a child's ability to produce the sounds necessary for speech
- ❑ Associated educational, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Pupils with specific speech and language disorders are those whose non-verbal ability is average or above, and whose skill in understanding and expressing themselves in spoken language is severely impaired. Their disability is not attributed to factors such as defective hearing, learning disabilities or primary social/emotional problems.

### **Referral Procedure**

Children are referred to the class by their Speech and Language Therapist and/or psychologist. These professionals will recommend the Language Class if they feel it is appropriate to the child's needs. The parents of the child submit an Application Form, which must be accompanied by the following:

1. Speech and Language Therapy Report
2. Psychologist's Report
3. School Report.

Each applicant is invited to visit the class for a 30-minute observation session in April. The parents get the opportunity then to visit the school and class, and meet the relevant staff. The teacher and Speech and Language Therapist get the chance to meet the child, and observe how he gets on in the class.

## **Educational Provision for Overseas Children**

### **Introduction**

St. Mary's College Junior School welcomes pupils of all nationalities and cultures, and its current enrolment includes overseas children. This document sets out our policy in relation to the enrolment and education of these children.

### **Enrolment of Overseas Pupils**

- The school's Enrolment Policy governs enrolment of all pupils.
- The enrolment procedure for non-national pupils is exactly the same as that for Irish pupils
- Overseas children are welcome to enrol in our school, provided there is a place in the appropriate class, in line with our enrolment policy
- Parents of overseas children will be afforded help in completion of enrolment documentation, should they require it
- Every effort will be made to create a warm and welcoming environment for overseas parents who approach the school to enrol their children.

### **Education of Overseas Pupils**

- Overseas pupils will be placed in an age appropriate class as far as possible

### **Provision of Supplementary English Support for Overseas Children**

- The amount of resource time allocated to any child will depend on his/her current command of the language, and his age
- In general, older pupils will be offered more Resource time, as there will be more pressure on them to attain mastery
- Resource time will be offered on a one to one basis, or in a small group setting, depending on the needs of the child. This will be determined by the Resource Teacher
- This resource time may be offered on a withdrawal basis, or by the Resource Teacher working with the child in his/her classroom. This will be decided by the teachers, based on the needs of the child
- This supplementary support will be phased out when the teachers have agreed the child has progressed enough to do so.

The school will encourage overseas parents to become actively involved in Parents' Association activities.

## **Glossary of Screening and Diagnostic Tests used in our School**

**At present the Drumcondra Reading, maths and spelling tests are used for general testing in all classes from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>.**

**Other tests include:**

**The Dyslexia Screening test**

**Group Reading Test**

**Neale Analysis of Reading Ability**

**Aston Index**

**Spar Reading Test**

**NRIT (Non Reading Intelligence Test)**

**Marino Graded Word Reading Scale**

**Single word Spelling Test**

**Schonell Graded Spelling Test**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson BOM**

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Principal/Secretary BOM**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_**