

Loreto Abbey Secondary School Dalkey

Whole-School Inclusion Policy

1. Introduction:

This policy document aims to outline the form that additional educational support for students with special educational needs (S.E.N.) takes in the school and the philosophy which underpins it. It is written in the context of The Education Act (1998) and takes cognisance of The Equal Status Act (2000), The Equality Act (2004), The Education Welfare Act (2000), The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003) and The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004). Three further publications have informed the content of this policy- "Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs-Post Primary Guidelines (Department of Education & Science (DES) Inspectorate: 2007) and "Exceptionally Able Students-Draft Guidelines for Teachers" (NCCA: 2007) and Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs (Circular 14 2017), (8/19) – Guidelines to Schools SET Allocation and (53/19) Exemptions from Irish (Post-Primary).

'Effective provision for students with special educational needs is situated within an inclusive whole-school framework which emphasises effective teaching and learning for all and good collaboration and engagement between schools, parents/guardians and students.

A key principle underpinning this revised model is that all students, irrespective of special educational needs, are welcomed and enabled to enroll in their local schools. In addition, a fundamental objective is that special education teaching resources are utilised in the optimum manner to improve learning experiences and educational outcomes for students with special educational needs'. (Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs (April 2017).

The document should be read in conjunction with the following policies: (1) Admissions, (2) Student Support, (3) Anti-Bullying (4) Whole School Guidance and Counselling Policy, (5) Assessment, (6) Child Protection, (7) Code of Behaviour, (8) Homework, (9) Literacy, (10) Student Support.

2. Mission:

'Each Loreto school aims... to set each student on a pathway to personal excellence, recognising the different aptitudes and gifts'.

In Loreto Abbey, we endeavour to ensure that our school is experienced "as a caring Christian Community in which students have the opportunity to achieve academic excellence and to grow spiritually, emotionally, socially, creatively and physically in a healthy environment." Excellence is understood in relation to each one's potential.

We see ourselves as an inclusive community that is welcoming of all. We foster an atmosphere of learning that is holistic in approach and nurtures each individual student's personal growth and development.

Our Special Educational Needs Programme is a tangible sign of our commitment to be an inclusive learning community. It is based directly on the needs of our students and therefore will be reviewed regularly to meet needs that may change.

3. Definitions:

- (a) Students with special educational needs are those who are restricted from participating in and benefiting 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. (EPSEN Act 2004).
- (b) Exceptionally able students are those understood to require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for in the general cohort of students.
- (c) ATS – Additional teaching support.

4. Roles:

The following (a)-(d) have responsibility for managing the school response to students with Special Educational Needs.

- (a) Board of Management:
 - Oversees the development, implementation and review of a Whole School Inclusion Policy

- Arranges for a periodic review of the range of curriculum provision within the school to ensure that suitable programmes are on offer to all students.
- Provide resources for the professional development of staff in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Ensures adequate accommodation and resources.
- Provides a secure facility for the storage of records.
- Ensures that the rights of parents as prescribed in legislation are upheld in the school.

(b) Principal:

'Under current legislation the principal of the school has overall responsibility for ensuring that the special educational needs of students are met. As a consequence, the principal has the general responsibility for establishing and promoting whole-school policies and procedures that are supportive of the learning of all students, including those with special educational needs' (Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines; DES, 2007, p 67).

The role of the school principal includes the following:

- Assumes overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policies and procedures relating to the inclusion of students with special educational needs
- Oversees a whole-school approach to assessment and screening to identify needs and to guide the allocation of appropriate supports
- Ensures effective engagement with feeder primary schools to support the transition of students with special educational needs
- In collaboration with the in-school management team, discharges a key function in the deployment of staff, allocation of resources, organisation of students and timetabling
- Ensures that systems are in place for effective sharing of relevant information on students' needs with all subject teachers
- Facilitates the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to the education of students with special educational needs, and ensure that all school staff (subject teachers and special education teachers, guidance counsellors, special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area

- Ensures that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, students and external professionals/agencies.
- Ensures that mainstream teachers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the education of students with special needs.
- Monitors implementation of Special Educational Needs (SEN) programme and selection of students for ATS (Additional Teaching Support).
- Makes application to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) for Additional Teaching Support and/or SNA posts for incoming students with special needs deemed to be over and above those provided for in the General Allocation Model (2017).
- Makes applications for Assistive Technology where appropriate for students with Special Educational Needs.
- Processes applications for exemptions from Irish.

(c) Deputy Principal

- Liaises with the feeder National schools and gathering information about the learning needs of students where appropriate.
- Is a member of the student support team and attends a weekly timetabled meeting as part of that team
- Attends the weekly timetabled Special Education Teaching team meeting.
- Liaises with the National Council for Special Education in relation to all students with Special Educational Needs.
- Liaises with National Educational Psychological Services and all other outside agencies involved with children with Special Educational Needs.
- Works with the Special Education Teacher coordinator to create timetables for teachers providing Additional Teaching Support.
- Manages the information transfer between parents of students with Special Educational Needs and teachers.
- Initial point of contact for parents who have concerns in relation to their daughter's Learning Needs

(d) Special Educational Teaching Co-ordinator/s:

- Is a member of the student support team and attends a weekly timetabled meeting as part of that team
- Facilitates a timetabled weekly meeting for the Special Education Teaching team.
- Is the point of contact for mainstream teachers who have concerns about a student's learning needs
- Co-ordinates the Special Education Teaching Team devising schemes of work to address the specific needs within the school cohort at any given time.
- Is part of the decision making team about the level of support provided to each student on the continuum;
Support for all
Support for some
Support for one (National Educational Psychological Services)
Level 2 Learning Programmes (Junior Certificate Programme)
- Co-ordinates Individual Education Plans/Student Support Plans for all students with Special Education Needs (SEN) in consultation with parents, students, SET team and teachers. *(These interventions will reflect the priority learning needs of students, as well as building on their strengths and interests).*
- Coordinates the reviews of Student Support plans/IEP
- Works in conjunction with the Guidance team to apply for Reasonable Accommodation for Certificate Exams (RACE) and Disability Access Route to Education (DARE).
- Keeps up-to-date records of all Additional Teaching Support timetables and all Special Educational Needs students.
- Facilitates communication with the general staff on SET issues.
- Organises the Special Education Teaching Department budget and purchases resources.

The following (e)-(h) work on a day-to-day basis with students with Special Educational Needs.

2nd December 2019

(e) Special Education Teacher:

1. Work with the Special Education Teaching co-ordinator on the Special Education Teaching team.
2. Attend a weekly timetabled Special Education Teaching team meeting.
3. Involved in co- teaching in mainstream classes with mainstream teachers.
4. Withdraws students for additional classes in particular subjects where appropriate
5. Provides in-class support where appropriate.
6. Provides specific support for students with special educational needs in social skills etc.
7. Special education teachers, in consultation with subject teachers, should, where possible, plan their interventions carefully to address students' priority learning needs and to achieve the targets identified in the relevant Student Support Plan
8. Supports and remediates the literacy and numeric needs of students.
9. Liaises with guidance counsellor and other staff members in relation to the selection and implementation of tests and other means for assessing students' achievement and progress.
10. Co-ordinates the gathering of information for Individual Education Plans/Student Support Plans for students with SEN from assessment reports by outside professionals and in-school assessment.
11. Are involved in the administration of standardised and diagnostic tests.
12. Are involved in the review of individual students' progress following the implementation of the individual education plan.
13. Are involved in target setting – (Linked to assessments and strengths based).
14. Provide advice to mainstream teachers as required.
15. Advise on RACE and DARE
16. Meet and advise parents as required.

(f) Guidance Counsellors:

1. Administer diagnostic assessment tests when appropriate.
2. Counsels in personal, educational and career development.
3. Assists with Psychological testing.
4. Provides career information management.

5. Consults with SET team, staff and parents.
6. Makes referrals to other professionals and agencies.
7. Takes the lead in RACE and DARE applications.

(g) Subject Teachers:

1. Subject teachers have first-line responsibility for the education of all students in their classes. Accordingly, subject teachers should ensure that they plan their lessons carefully to address the diverse needs within the classroom.
2. Collaborate with the SE team in identifying pupils who may have general or specific learning difficulties.
3. As far as possible implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of students with special educational needs.
These include:
 - Co-operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms
 - Collaborative problem-solving activities
 - Heterogeneous group work
 - Differentiation
 - Interventions to promote social and emotional competence
 - Embedding of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching, learning and assessment
4. Provides learning activities and materials that will ensure success.

(h) Special Needs Assistants

1. Special Needs Assistants make a valuable contribution to the capacity of the school to provide inclusive education for students with special educational needs. The duties of the Special Needs Assistant are assigned by the Principal acting on behalf of the Board of Management and are outlined in Circular SNA 12/05.
2. When the SNA is engaged in assisting a student or a group of students in relation to a particular learning task, this should always take place in accordance with the directions of the teacher who has assigned the task.
3. An SNA is expected to treat all matters relating to school business and their work in school as strictly confidential.

(i) Parents:

Loreto Abbey recognises the right of parents/guardians of students to be involved in and consulted about the programme of education available to their child. Parents are encouraged to actively communicate with the school if they observe any learning or related difficulties at home. In all cases where screening, assessment and profiling are conducted, parents are consulted and their permission sought. When a Student Support Plan is being developed, parents will be involved.

(j) Students:

We welcome the involvement of students with special educational needs in planning for their own learning. They are encouraged to contribute to the learning targets as set out in their Student Support Plan.

5. Access to Additional Teaching Support (ATS):

All our SET input is based around a three-step process;

- a) How can we identify SE needs?
- b) How can we meet SE needs?
- c) How can we monitor and report on progress?

In our school we **identify special educational needs** in the following way;

- Parents may indicate on the student information form on enrolling in the school of special needs that were identified in Primary school. The Principal/Deputy Principal meets parents in February of the year of entry to review psychological reports and to complete applications to NCSE where appropriate.
- A student who has had a professional assessment which outlines a need for support due to either a learning need or a difficulty which is impacting on the student's ability to access the curriculum in the same way as their peers.
- A student who has a Specific Learning Difficulty or a General Learning Difficulty.
- A student who received Learning Support in Primary School. (Educational Passports are transferred)
- A student identified during the in-house standardised testing and/or **Formal Assessments**.

- A student identified by their teachers as having difficulty with one or more of their subjects – either through formal or informal assessment.
- A student who is identified as not meet potential or exceeding potential in our tracking meetings.
- Consideration is given to students with emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- Student self-referral

Formal Assessment

Formal assessment **may** involve some or all of the following:

- Review of standardised tests
- Review of in-house exams and reports
- Behavioural record if appropriate
- Consultation with staff
- Consultation with parents
- Consultation with the student

Following this profiling stage, decisions are made as to the appropriate support warranted. It may be decided that:

- There is no need for further action.
- There is a need for monitoring and support in a mainstream setting. (Support for all – NEPS)
- Purposeful withdrawal or in-class support is desirable.
- Further investigation is required and parents will be advised in relation to assessments.

6. When a student is identified as needing Additional Teaching Support

- (a) In a situation where a student is identified as needing additional teaching support, a plan is drawn up. Parents, staff and the student are involved in the preparation of the plan. Priority learning needs are identified and a time frame for the attainment of targets is included. Targets are set and strategies and resources required are identified. A date is set of the review of the plan.
- (b) The format of this plan is listed in Appendix A.
- (c) A scheme of work is developed and a review of progress with the student takes place every 6-8 weeks. This review may take into account the perspectives of both parents and staff.

- (d) All records pertaining to the student will be retained on the student file.

7. Organisation of Class Groups:

In First and Second year, a mixed ability policy is in place. In Third Year, classes are banded for Irish and Maths with regular class reviews taking place. Transition Year operates a mixed ability policy, as is senior cycle for all subjects with the exception of Irish, English and Maths.

8. Organisation of Additional Teaching Support:

Currently, we have a mixed model of ATS in operation.

- Individual Withdrawal
- Small Group Withdrawal
- In class support

- Co-teaching
- Reduced Timetables
- L2LP

9. Other Issues:

(a) Withdrawals:

The SEN Department may withdraw students from subjects in consultation with the respective teachers and with parents. In some cases, students with SEN may be on reduced timetables to facilitate their particular needs.

(b) Irish Exemptions:

Irish exemptions will only be granted when the criteria outlined in Circular 58/19 are met. All students who have an Irish exemption at Junior Cycle will be offered as much ATS at this time as our resources allow. This allocation may vary from year to year.

(c) Information:

In September, teachers are briefed on all pupils with SEN enrolled in the school. This briefing includes:

- Name of pupil
- Category of difficulty
- Support being provided
- Potential areas of difficulty
- Potential provision at State Exams.

Parental permission is sought in advance for the transfer of this information.

(e) House and Mock Examinations:

Every effort is made to offer Reasonable Accommodations to students in receipt of them for school examinations.

10. The Exceptionally Able Student:

Students who require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for the general cohort of students are deemed to be exceptionally able. It is estimated that 5-8% of the school population will demonstrate very high levels of attainment in one or more of the following areas:

- general intellectual ability or talent
- specific academic aptitude or talent
- Visual and performing arts / sport.
- leadership ability
- Creative and productive thinking
- Mechanical ingenuity
- Special abilities in empathy, understanding and negotiation.

Loreto abbey offers extension activities in all subjects through the differentiated curriculum on subject plans.

However, we also offer further opportunities for the exceptionally able student through the following activities;

- Art Club,
- Coding,
- Maths Club and Olympiad
- Young Scientist
- Orchestra
- Choir
- Creative Writing
- Debating
- Drama Club
- Book Club

11. Monitoring and Evaluation:

The monitoring and evaluation of the programme will be conducted on an ongoing basis throughout the year by the Principal and Deputy Principal, Special Education Needs Co-ordinator and the ATS teacher.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on

20th June 2019 and reviewed with slight amendment on 2nd December 2019.

Signed: 

Date: 2nd December 2019

Date for review: 2021

Index of Acronyms:

SEN	Special Educational Needs
DES	Department of Education & Skills
ATS	Additional Teaching Support
SET	Special Education Teaching
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Services
JCP	Junior Certificate Programme
RACE	Reasonable Accommodation for Certificate Exams
DARE	Disability Access Route to Education