



## Loreto Abbey Secondary School, Dalkey

### Whole-School Inclusion Policy

#### Mission Statement

*'Our school is a caring Christian Community in which pupils have the opportunity to achieve academic excellence and to grow spiritually, emotionally, socially, creatively and physically in a healthy environment.'*

#### **1. Introduction:**

This policy document aims to outline the form of additional educational support for students with additional educational needs (A.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 in mainstream class. The following circulars have also informed the content of this policy, 'The operation/application and deployment of special education teaching resources', circular 0064/2024 and ' Exemptions from the study of Irish (Post-Primary), circular 0055/2022.

*'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) Wellbeing.

## **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 Additional Educational Needs (AEN) 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 additional 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.

#### **4. Roles:**

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

##### **(a) Board of Management:**

- Oversees the development, implementation and review of a Whole School Inclusion Policy.
- Ensures Additional Education Teaching (AET) allocations are used strictly for their intended purpose.
- Reviews and signs off on the Principal's annual report regarding AEN resource deployment.
- 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 additional 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 additional 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 additional educational needs.
- In collaboration with the senior leadership 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 additional educational needs, and ensures that all school staff (subject teachers and special education teachers, guidance counselors, 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 additional educational needs.
- Monitors implementation of AEN programme and selection of students for Additional Teaching Support (ATS).
- 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.
- Liaises with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) and all other outside agencies involved with children with AEN.
- Works with the Additional Educational Needs Coordinator (AENCO) to create timetables for teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs).
- Manages the information transfer between parents of students with identified AEN and teachers.
- Initial point of contact for parents who have concerns in relation to their daughter's learning needs.
- Attends a weekly AEN meeting.

(d) Additional Educational Needs Coordinator (AENCO):

- 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 AEN Department.
- Is the main point of contact for mainstream teachers who have concerns about a student's learning needs.
- Co-ordinates the AEN Team devising plans to support those who require additional support.
- Co-ordinates Student Support Plans for all students with AEN in consultation with parents, students, AEN team and subject teachers. (*These interventions will reflect the priority learning needs of students, as well as building on their strengths and interests*).
- 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 a few* (National Educational Psychological Services), Level 2 Learning Programmes (Junior Certificate Programme).
- Coordinates the reviews of Student Support Plans.
- Makes applications for Assistive Technology where appropriate for students with AEN.
- Works in conjunction with the Guidance team to apply for Reasonable Accommodation for Certificate Exams (RACE).
- Administers diagnostic testing to support teaching and learning, and for RACE applications.
- Keeps up-to-date records of all ATS timetables and all AEN students.
- Facilitates communication with the general staff on issues regarding students with AEN.
- Updates the AEN Provision Plan / Register and school management system (VSware).
- Organises the AEN Department budget and purchases resources.

The following (e)-(i) work on a day-to-day basis with students with Additional Educational Needs:

(e) Additional Education Teacher (AET):

- Works as part of the AEN department, attending weekly timetabled meetings and providing advice to mainstream teachers.
- Delivers support through co-teaching and in-class support in mainstream

settings or via withdrawal for specific subjects when appropriate.

- Leads target setting based on gathered information, assessments, student voice, parental input and student strengths. This will be used to form a Student Support Plan (SSP). The AET will conduct a February and May review of the individual student progress.
- Addresses student needs across learning, wellbeing, and social and emotional development. If applicable, these will be reflected in the SSP.
- Coordinates with subject teachers to plan interventions that address priority needs and targets identified in SSP.
- Liaises with the guidance department and other staff to select and implement achievement tests, including the administration of standardised and diagnostic tests.
- Liaises with parents of students with AEN.
- Where appropriate, contribute towards student information assessment forms required by external agencies including educational-psychologists, Lucena/CAHMS or any other agencies.

**(f) Guidance Counsellors:**

- Administers diagnostic assessment tests when appropriate.
- Administers psychometric testing for students at various times throughout their education, specifically 1st and 4th Year.
- Provide initial support for common issues such as anxiety and self-esteem, using counselling techniques, but know their limitations.
- When a student requires more than general support, the guidance counsellor works with parents and the school's Student Support Team to refer to external HSE or CAMHS services for formal psychological evaluation.
- They are members of the Student Support Team.
- Provide focused support on educational, personal and career development.
- Consults with the AEN team/department, staff and parents.
- Meets with students at various points in Senior Cycle to discuss educational and career options.
- Takes the lead in DARE applications for 6th Year students.
- Liaises with the AEN Department in completing RACE applications for Senior Cycle students.

**(g) Subject Teachers:**

- Subject teachers have first-line responsibility for the education of all students in their classes. Accordingly, subject teachers should monitor and adapt the learning environment to accommodate the diverse strengths and needs within the classroom.
- Subject teachers consult with the young person when needs are identified in relation to their learning to ascertain their views.
- Collaborate with the AEN Department in identifying pupils who may have general or specific learning difficulties.
- Regularly consults the AEN Provision Plan / Register for information on students with AEN.
- Refers to the 'Classroom Support' section of the AEN Provision Plan for information on how to best support students in the classroom.
- Keep clear records in steps taken to support students they have identified as having possible learning needs.
- Consult with the AENCO or members of the AEN team if they are concerned that Classroom Level is not meeting a student's needs.
- Completes/contributes towards student information assessment forms required by external agencies including educational-psychologists, Lucena/CAHMS or any other agencies.
- Engage in professional development.
- Works in collaboration with the special needs assistants.
- As far as possible, implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of students with additional educational needs. These may include:
  - Co-operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms
  - Collaborative problem-solving activities
  - Heterogeneous group work
  - Differentiation and differentiation of homework and assessments
  - Universal Design for Learning
  - Interventions to promote social and emotional competence
  - Embedding of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching, learning and assessment.
  - Provides learning activities and materials that will ensure success.

**(h) Special Needs Assistants**

- Special Needs Assistants (SNA) make a valuable contribution to the capacity of the school to provide inclusive education for students with Additional Educational Needs. The duties of the SNA are assigned by the Principal acting on behalf of the Board of Management and are outlined in Circular 12/05 & 30/2024.
- The role is diverse, from aiding a student with physical and care needs to supporting students in accessing the curriculum.
- The SNA works in collaboration with the subject teacher to ensure directions are followed or adapted when necessary.
- An SNA is expected to treat all matters relating to school business and their work in school as strictly confidential.
- Keep records and update student logs.
- Engage in professional development.

**(i) Year Heads**

- Liases with the senior leadership team, Guidance Department, AENCO, AEN Department and subject teachers to monitor and support students' learning.
- Makes referrals to the AENCO.
- Monitors academic progress and attendance of year group.
- Completes/contributes towards student information assessment forms required by external agencies including educational-psychologists, Lucena/CAHMS or any other agencies.

**(j) 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. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the development of their child's Student Support Plan.

**(k) Students:**

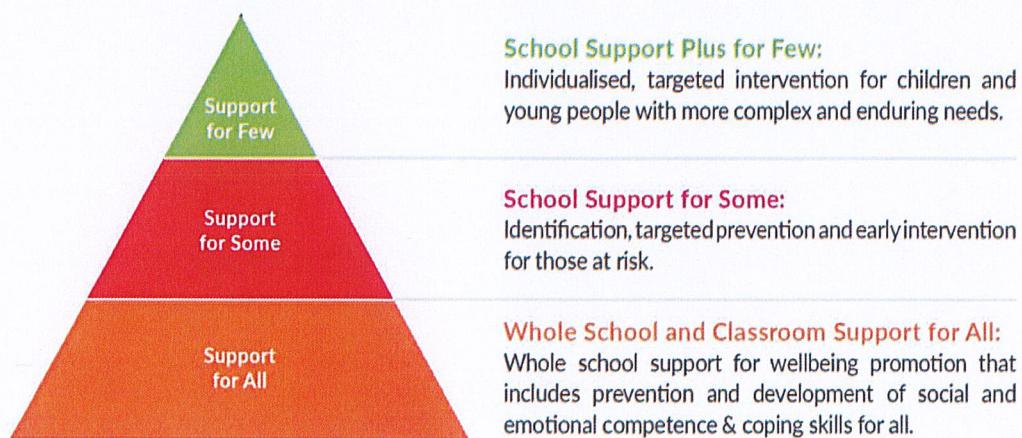
We welcome the involvement of students with additional educational needs in planning for their own learning. They are encouraged to

contribute to the learning targets as set out in their Student Support Plan and the overall development of this plan. Student voice is an integral part in the decision making process.

### **5. Continuum of Support:**

The Continuum of Support is the framework used by schools to identify and respond to AEN.

This model allows schools to provide support based on a student's immediate needs whether those needs are academic, social, emotional, or behavioral. It follows a graduated approach, ensuring that students with the greatest level of need receive the most intensive support. Interventions can be incremental and recognises that students can need different levels of support at different times, this includes reducing the support allocated. Once needs are identified and a decision is made as to which level of support is to be accessed, a plan is devised as to how to meet the students' needs. These plans are monitored and reviewed.



### **6. Access to Additional Teaching Support (ATS):**

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

- Parents may indicate on the student information form on enrolling in the school of additional educational needs that have already been identified.
- 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 received additional support in primary school who may require continued support in secondary school (Educational Passports are transferred and primary school visits).
- A student identified during the in-house standardised testing and/or **Formal Assessments**.
- A student identified by their teachers when 'Classroom Support Level' is not meeting the student's needs.
- 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 at Classroom Support Level
- What level of support is deemed necessary on the continuum.
- Further investigation is required and parents will be advised in relation to assessments.

## **7. When a student is identified as needing Additional Teaching Support**

(a) In a situation where a student is identified as needing additional teaching support at School Support or School Support Plus Level, a Student Support 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 for the review of the plan.

(b) All records pertaining to the student (including the Student Support Plan) will be retained on the Student Support File.

## **8. 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.

## **9. Organisation of Additional Teaching Support:**

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

- Individual Withdrawal
- Small Group Withdrawal
- In class support or co- teaching
- Reduced Timetables
- Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LP)

## **10. Other Issues:**

### **(a) Withdrawals:**

The AEN Department may withdraw students from subjects in consultation with the respective teachers and with parents. In some cases, students with AEN may have adapted timetables to facilitate their particular needs.

### **(b) Irish Exemptions:**

Irish exemptions will only be granted when the criteria outlined in Circular 0055/2022 are met. All students who have an Irish exemption at Junior Cycle (under categories 2.2.2, 2.2.3 & 2.2.4) will be offered additional support. This allocation may vary from year to year due to differing and changing needs of students.

### **(c) Information:**

In September, teachers are briefed on all pupils with AEN 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.

Relevant information pertaining to each student with AEN is recorded on the school management system, VSWare under the AEN tab for the relevant student. This information can include their diagnosis, if support is provided and any exam accommodations already granted. AEN information is also recorded in the AEN Provision Plan/ Register.

(e) Examinations:

The State Examinations Commission (SEC) offers reasonable accommodations (RACE) to minimise the impact of a student's additional need on their performance in state examinations. The AEN Department in consultation with the Guidance Department applies for accommodations on behalf of students who meet the strict criteria. These are applied for in 3rd and 6th Year. For mock examinations, students are provided with the opportunity to experience the accommodations that have been applied for or granted where possible. For house exams, accommodations are made for students (in all years) when necessary and possible.

**11. 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.

These students are identified through a referral system, academic monitoring and achievement in standardised tests. 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
- Lego Club
- Young Scientist
- Music groups (Orchestra, song writing, choirs)
- Creative Writing
- Debating in English, Irish, Model United Nations (MUN) and foreign languages
- Literacy based extra curricular clubs

## **12. 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, AENCO and the AET teacher.

## **13. Transitions**

Transitions can at times be challenging for all students. The school endeavours to ensure a smooth and successful transfer of all students from primary to post primary school. If an incoming student with complex AEN, a transition programme can be arranged. For all students, the AENCO or Deputy Principal liaises with the feeder primary schools to ensure the school can prepare for the incoming students and transition being made. Prospective parents are encouraged to attend open days, information evenings and engage with the AENCO if required before commencing the school year.

## **14. Wellbeing and Bí Cinealta:**

Loreto Abbey Secondary School is committed to promoting the wellbeing of all members of our school community, students and staff alike. This approach to wellbeing forms an integral part of an inclusive school culture.

Wellbeing is understood as supporting students to feel safe, respected, valued and connected within the school community, so that they are fully able to engage in all academic and co-curricular aspects of school life.

Bí Cineálta, our Anti-Bullying Policy, underpins this commitment and affirms the school's stance that bullying behaviour of any kind is unacceptable. More

information on our approach can be found in our Bí Cineálta policy.

Through a proactive, whole-school approach that includes pastoral care, student support structures, restorative practices and clear reporting procedures, the school works to foster kindness, respect and positive relationships. The Wellbeing programme, Student Support Team and Bí Cineálta policy operate in a complementary way to ensure that students' social, emotional and mental health needs are identified early and responded to in a supportive, compassionate and consistent manner.

*13th January 2026*

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on

Signed: *Eilis Humphreys*

Date: 14/01/2026

Date for review:

**Index of Acronyms:**

AEN Additional Educational Needs

DES Department of Education & Skills

ATS Additional Teaching Support

AET Additional Education Teaching

L2LP Level 2 Learning Programme

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