

## **Special Educational Needs Policy - St. Brigid's N.S. Ballysax**

### **Introduction**

St Brigid's NS, Ballysax welcomes the enrolment of children with special educational needs. It strives to provide a safe, caring and stimulating environment where each child is happy and can grow and develop to their fullest potential. Children with special educational needs are taught in mainstream classes. Extra support is provided by the S.E.N. team in a number of ways. This may include individual withdrawal, group withdrawal, team teaching, station teaching or in-class support. For any individual child it may involve one or a mixture of the above. In addition to literacy and numeracy difficulties, many pupils will have specific needs in such areas as oral language, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development and application to learning. Resources are allocated to those in greatest need.

St. Brigid's NS supports a whole-school approach to special educational needs provision and this will be evident in the following ways:

- A positive ethos and learning environment whereby all pupils, including those with special educational needs, feel welcome and experience a sense of community and belonging
- An emphasis on promoting pupils' participation and active engagement in their learning and in the life of the school
- A commitment to developing pupils' academic, social, emotional and independent living skills
- A focus on high aspirations and on improving outcomes for all pupils

### **Rationale**

This policy is drawn up to meet the needs of children with special educational needs. It aims to draw on best practice and comply with department guidelines. It provides guidance and a structure for teachers and is a source of information for the whole school community on how children with special educational needs are supported.

The policy is formulated in accordance with:

- Special Educational Needs – A Continuum of Support NEPS 2007
- Circular 0030/2014 - The Special Needs Assistant (SNA)
- Special Education Needs Circular 13/2017
- Guidelines for Primary Schools 2017: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools
- It is informed by a Whole School Evaluation (WSE) carried out by the inspectorate in 2015 which stated: “The exemplary practices observed in several SEN settings should be incorporated into school policy and practice”, that the “quality of teaching varied from fair to exemplary” and that the “quality of IEPs vary”. These statements and advice therein have been adopted by the principal, SETs and class teachers.

### **Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School**

The Special Educational Needs Policy is linked with the following aspects of the school ethos:

- Promoting respect for ourselves and others
- Preparation for life
- The creation of a friendly, inclusive learning environment
- Promoting co-operation and healthy interaction between teachers, pupils, ancillary staff, parents, Boards of Management and the wider school community

### **Aims of Special Education Provision**

- To provide early intervention programmes aimed at preventing later learning difficulties.
- To foster a sense of self worth and develop confidence.
- To develop positive attitudes to learning for life.
- To provide supplementary teaching and additional support in Literacy and Numeracy.
- To promote parental involvement.
- To develop an individual education plan for each child with a low incidence disability.
- To provide whole school collaborative support for children with special needs.
- To implement recommendations received from other relevant professionals ie. Psychologist, Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapist etc.

### **Current SEN Staff:**

- 3 full time S.E. N. Teachers
- 2 S.N.A.s with shared access
- Principal
- 7 class teachers

## **Roles and Responsibilities for Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

Provision for children with special educational needs is a collaborative responsibility shared by all; the D.E.S, the N.C.S.E, the Board of Management, the Principal, the teachers and special needs assistants.

### **Individual Roles and Responsibilities**

1. Whole School Planning
2. The Principal
3. The Board of Management
4. The Class Teacher
5. The Special Education Teachers (SETs)
6. Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)
7. Parents
8. The child
9. The SEN team (SETs and Principal)

#### **1. Whole School Planning**

St. Brigid's N.S, adopts a whole-school approach to programme planning and the implementation of early-intervention and prevention programmes. In order to achieve this, the school has adapted our existing special educational needs policies to guide the new approach to the allocation of resources. A whole-school approach involves collaborative action by the school community (in consultation with parents and pupils) to improve pupil learning, behaviour and well-being. It encompasses a process of reflection, planning and review of policies and practices, and includes an evaluation of how pupils with special educational needs are identified by the school, the interventions that are put in place to meet their needs and how the outcomes of those interventions are measured and monitored. A whole-school approach should address the full continuum of needs - ranging from milder and more transient needs to difficulties that are severe and enduring (for example, significant learning,

sensory, physical, communication, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties).

All staff have been engaging in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and are familiar with the six-stage evaluation process - School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016 – 2020 (DES, 2016). In September 2016, the Inspectorate published Looking at Our School 2016 – A Quality Framework for Primary Schools (DES, 2016). When applied to our school's provision for pupils with special educational needs, the domains and statements of practice enable teachers and school leaders to review their practices, to identify what they are doing well, and to recognise aspects of the school's work that could be further developed to improve learning experiences and outcomes for these pupils.

All pupils should be enabled to:

- Engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities
- Grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive
- Reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning
- Experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning

In order to achieve this, all teachers should:

- Plan for assessing pupils' attainment of the intended learning objectives of the lesson, or series of lessons, using both assessment of learning and assessment for learning
- Maintain assessment records that are clear, useful and easy to interpret and share
- Meaningfully differentiate content and activities in order to cater for the varying needs and abilities of pupils

## **2. Role of the Principal**

The principal's leadership role is central in the provision for pupils with special educational needs and includes the following:

- Developing inclusive whole-school policies and monitoring their implementation
- Assigning staff strategically to teaching roles, including special education roles
- Co-ordinating teachers' work to ensure continuity of provision for all pupils
- Ensure that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, pupils and external professionals / agencies
- Ensuring that effective systems are implemented to identify pupils' needs and that progress is monitored methodically
- Facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to education of pupils with special educational needs, and ensure that all school staff (class teachers, special education teachers and special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area.
- Together with SEN teachers, advise parents on the procedures for availing of special education and support teaching.
- Together with the SEN teachers, liaise with the S.E.N.O. and process applications for special education services.

## **3. Role of the Board of Management**

- To provide adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources for the S.E.N. team.
- To provide for the storage of information and records relating to children with special educational needs.
- To ensure compliance with department guidelines.

## **4. The Role of the Class Teacher**

- The Class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her care.
- The Classroom teacher must ensure that they plan their lessons carefully to address the diverse needs within the classroom.
- They need to implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. These include:

- Co-operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms
- Collaborative problem-solving activities
- Heterogeneous group work
- Interventions to promote social and emotional competence
- Embedding Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching, learning and assessment
- Differentiate their lessons. This can be achieved by:
  - varying the level, structure, mode of instruction and pace of lessons to meet individual needs
  - Adapting lessons to take account of pupils' interests
  - Matching tasks to pupils' abilities and needs
  - Adapting and utilising resources, including the use of technology
  - Aspiring towards suitably challenging learning outcomes and assessing accordingly
- Class teachers need to make lessons accessible to a broad range of pupils through the use of a variety of appropriate teaching approaches and methodologies, including active learning, small-group tuition, individual teaching, and scaffolded instruction. This may also require environmental
  - adaptations to promote curricular access.
  - They need to administer the appropriate standardised tests in Literacy and Numeracy in the summer term of each year.
  - They need to design and implement in consultation with parents appropriate classroom support plans.
  - They need to collaborate with Special Education Teachers and parents in the development of appropriate School Support Plans/School Support Plus plans and to review the plans with the SET at the end of the first instructional term.
  - They need to coordinate the provision of team teaching /in-class support ensuring it is of benefit to the targeted pupils.
  - They need to liaise with and seek advice of the learning support teacher on assessment and preventative strategies.
  - They need to discuss with and inform parents of their child's progress.
  - They need to coordinate the work of an SNA assigned to a child/children in their class.

## **5. Role of the Special Education Teacher**

- Special education teachers should be familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and to meet a variety of needs. Teaching approaches will include a combination of team-teaching initiatives, cooperative teaching, early intervention and small group or individual support.
- Organise provision for pupils receiving support including the drawing up of timetables for SETs and SNAs.
- Monitor and support the implementation of the S.E.N. Policy.
- Manage the selection of pupils for support under the new SEN model.
- Advise and support teachers in implementing the Staged Model of Intervention as laid down by NEPS.
- Liaise with the NEPS psychologist around support for the school and the provision of assessments.
- Advise teachers on appropriate screening and assessment.
- Support the professional development of teachers in using preventative strategies.
- Provide stress management for pupils with ASD e.g. structured movement breaks or other suitable activities.
- To engage and liaise with external bodies and agencies.
- To provide advice and support on the development of I.E.P.s
- To advise on the purchase of appropriate special education resources.
- Maintaining a list of pupils receiving support and maintain planning and progress records or equivalent for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of support.
- Developing in collaboration with the class teacher and parents, an I.E.P. for each child in their caseload with a low incidence disability.
- The provision of individual support, group support, team teaching or in-class support.
- Liaising with and implementing programmes or recommendations provided by other professionals.
- Assessing and recording the child's progress and needs & Informing parents of their child's progress

- To assist class teachers with assessment using Standardised tests: BIAP, MIST, Sigma-t and Drumcondra Literacy.
- Purchase Standardised tests and organise for Standardised tests to be sent for correction by outside agencies if deemed appropriate by the principal.
- Class teachers may bring their concerns to the attention of SET's regarding pupils that they are concerned about. These concerns will be recorded.

6. **The Role of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)** The duties of the SNA will be assigned by the Principal Teacher in accordance with Circular 0037/2009. Duties will be modified to support the particular needs of the pupil(s) concerned.

## 7. The Role of Parents

Good parental engagement is a critical factor in enhancing outcomes for pupils with special educational needs. Parental engagement is enhanced when parents are consulted in relation to their children's needs and strengths, on the supports being developed to support their child and when they are involved in regular reviews of progress. The Continuum of Support process and use of the Student Support File provide valuable opportunities to engage with parents and to build a collaborative approach to identifying and responding to the needs of pupils with special educational needs.

Some practical ways in which parents can help include:

- Talking and listening to their child
- Displaying a keen interest in school and school work
- Affirming achievement
- Working with the school to develop Support Plans
- Reading to or with their child
- Being familiar with specific learning targets



- Being actively involved in the life of the school and particularly in their child's education
- Arranging meetings with teachers
- Checking that homework is completed as required
- Taking part in programmes which will enhance their child's learning e.g. Paired Reading, Computer Programmes as recommended by class teachers or SET, interventions given to parent by class teacher or Special Education Teacher

### **8. The Role of the child**

Good engagement and participation in their own education is very important for children with special educational needs. It can enhance their academic and social and emotional outcomes.

The school can enhance learning in the following ways:

- Listen to and build on pupils' interests, aspirations and strengths when developing educational programmes
- Actively include pupils in a shared assessment for learning process, setting shared objectives and jointly reviewing progress
- Through teaching that is responsive to the personal needs of the learner
- Structuring and pacing learning experiences that are challenging, engaging and enjoyable

### **9. The Role of the SEN team**

- To meet, regularly, at least once per term to review progress and plan accordingly.
- To monitor the progress of pupils receiving support.
- To work collaboratively and share best practice.
- To avail of relevant professional development.
- To evaluate and acquire suitable resources.

### **Engaging with external bodies and agencies**

External bodies and agencies may be used in a consultative and / or advisory capacity where deemed appropriate. These outside agencies could include:

- NEPS Psychologist
- HSE / GP

- Child and Adolescence Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- SENO
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Enable Ireland
- SESS

The SETs, in collaboration with the Principal, class teacher and parents / guardians will liaise with external bodies and agencies in developing and facilitating support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support.

### **Early Intervention for Pupils**

- Pupils who achieve below the cut off point in MIST (Senior Infants)
- Pupils who achieve below the cut off point in BIAP (Junior Infants)

### **Strategies**

- Focus on language development, phonemic awareness, word identification and basic mathematical skills
- Jolly Phonics Programme
- Aistear
- Ready Set Go Maths
- Action Literacy
- Use of graded reading schemes
- Friends For Life
- Class Support Plans
- Teacher observations / learning checklists
- Parents assisting in the classroom
- Liaising with NEPS Psychologist

### **Identification of Pupils**

The following guidelines will be used to identify pupils for supplementary teaching

- Pupils with complex needs
- Pupils below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile in standardised tests in English
- Pupils below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile in standardised tests in Maths

- Pupils with specific learning difficulties – Dyslexia
- Results of MIST
- Results of BIAP Teacher recommendation

**Procedures for continuing/discontinuing S.E.N. Support**

The progress of children receiving support will be observed by the Support teacher on an ongoing basis. This support may be reviewed through appropriate testing where deemed necessary. Individual Education Plans (IEP’s)/Student Support Plans of each student will be reviewed in March each year. Any decision to discontinue support will be in consultation with the child’s class teacher, parents and support teacher.

The guidelines provided for Action Literacy and Ready Set Go Maths will be adhered to. Action Literacy will be assessed before and after the programme has run in each class. Ready Set Go Maths will be assessed through assessed goals at the relevant times of year in both Junior Infants and Senior Infants.

**Staged Module of Intervention**

<b>Table 1: Identification of Educational Needs through the Continuum of Support Process</b>	
<b>Classroom Support</b>	<p>The class teacher considers how to differentiate the learning programme effectively to accommodate the needs of all pupils in the class. A classroom support plan is developed and/or adjusted over time for those pupils who do not respond appropriately to the differentiated programme. This is informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Parental Consultation</li> <li>● Teacher Observation Records</li> <li>● Teacher-designed measures/assessments</li> <li>● Basic Needs Checklist</li> <li>● Learning Environment Checklist</li> <li>● Pupil Consultation Checklist – My Thoughts About Checklist</li> <li>● Literacy and Numeracy Tests</li> <li>● Screening Tests of Language Skills</li> </ul> <p>A Classroom Support Plan runs for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.</p>
<b>School Support</b>	<p>At this level a Support Plan is devised and informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teacher Observation Records</li> <li>● Teacher-designed measures/assessments</li> <li>● Parent/Pupil Interviews</li> <li>● Learning Environment Checklist</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Diagnostic Assessments in Literacy/Numeracy</li> <li>● Formal Observation of Behaviour including ABC charts, frequency measures</li> <li>● Functional Assessment as appropriate, including screening measure for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties</li> </ul> <p>A Support Plan at this level may detail suitable teaching approaches including team-teaching, small group or individual teaching.</p> <p>A School Support Plan operates for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.</p>
<b>School Support Plus</b>	<p>This level of the Continuum is informed by a detailed, systematic approach to information gathering and assessment using a broad range of formal and informal assessment tools, reports from outside professionals (as appropriate) and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teacher observation and teacher- designed measures</li> <li>● Parent and Pupil Interviews</li> <li>● Functional Assessment</li> <li>● Results of Standardised Testing such as measures of cognitive ability: social. Emotional and behavioural functioning; adaptive functioning etc.</li> </ul> <p>Data generated from this process are then used to plan an appropriate intervention and can serve as a baseline against which to map progress.</p> <p>A Support Plan at this level is likely to be more detailed and individualised and to include longer term planning and consultation.</p>

## Professional Development

The Board of Management and in-school management strongly support and encourage continuous professional development for teachers. The Board may at its discretion provide financial assistance to staff members engaging in relevant professional development. Notice of all professional development opportunities and courses are posted on the staffroom notice board. They are received from Kildare, Portlaoise and Dublin West Education Centres among others.

## Transfer

The school has links with post primary schools in the area. Every effort is made to support pupils in making the transfer to second level.

St Brigid's NS liaises with Kildare Youth Services who run a workshop entitled Stepping Stones School Transition Programme with 6<sup>th</sup> class in the school each year. The workshop focuses on exploring any concerns young people may have in relation to the transition from primary to secondary school. Young people are then invited to join a more intensive week long summer camp (free of charge) with KYS.

The school provides school transfer documents developed by the NCCA (6<sup>th</sup> Class Passport/End of year report) to the relevant post primary schools.

Ratified by Board of Management \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson

# Appendices

Appendix 1.

Table 2: Planning Template to Guide the Allocation of Additional Teaching Supports for Pupils with Special Educational Needs
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<p>Action 1: Identification of pupils with special educational needs</p>	<p>Review existing information on pupils' needs, using school-based data, and any information from parents and external professionals. Engage in additional screening and data gathering as required, using informal and formal assessment approaches (for example, teacher observations, information on social and emotional competence, standardised tests, diagnostic tests).</p> <p>Identify all pupils with special educational needs in the school. Match their needs to the appropriate level on the Continuum of Support.</p>
<p>Action 2: Setting targets</p>	<p>Based on individual needs, set clear learning targets for each pupil at each level of the Continuum of Support.</p>
<p>Action 3: Planning teaching methods and approaches</p>	<p>Identify the level and type of intervention required to meet targets for each pupil on the Continuum of Support. Schools should consider methodologies best suited to promoting meaningful inclusion such as differentiation, heterogeneous grouping, team-teaching and small group teaching. They should also be mindful that the interventions and supports that they are using are evidence-informed.</p>
<p>Action 4: Organising early-intervention and prevention programmes</p>	<p>Based on identified needs, choose evidence-informed early intervention/prevention programmes to address concerns. Identify time needed and staffing commitment required.</p>
<p>Action 5: Organising and deploying special education teaching resources</p>	<p>Cross-reference the needs of pupils at School Support and School Support Plus levels and consider common needs that can be met by grouping to ensure effective and efficient teaching and learning approaches. Agree which teacher(s) will cater for these groups/individuals and when and where the teaching will take place. Be mindful of the requirement that pupils with the greatest level of need should receive the greatest level of support from teachers with relevant expertise.</p>
<p>Action 6: Tracking, recording and reviewing progress</p>	<p>Establish a tracking and recording system, to ensure that the progress of all pupils in meeting their identified targets is monitored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● At Whole-school and Classroom Support level by all teachers</li> <li>● At the School Support and School Support Plus levels by class teachers and special education teachers</li> </ul>

