

# Enabling Schools - Enabling Inclusion

## Special Education Needs Policy

### Description

Scoil Mhuire Ennistymon is a voluntary secondary school and is under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust). The school embraces the ethos of the Sisters of Mercy. Founded in 1872 by the Sisters of Mercy, the present school was opened in 1977-78. It is an all girls' school, although some classes at senior cycle are mixed (co-operation with local C.B.S). There are approximately 25 staff members and an enrolment of 300 students.

The feeder schools in our catchment area are:

Inagh, Kilfenora, Clouna, Scoil Mhaincín Ennistymon, Corofin, Lahinch, Furglan, Moy, Cloonanaha, Kilnaboy, Rineen, Kilshanny, Liscannor and Mol an Óige.

A number of students travel from outside the catchment area.

### Rationale

The purpose of this Special Education Needs policy is:

- To provide a safe and caring environment where all levels and types of intelligence are encouraged and valued.
- To provide an inclusive learning environment where all students are catered for and encouraged to reach their full potential.
- To enable each student to develop her social skills and self-esteem, enhancing self-confidence.
- To ensure that students develop a wide range of skills including oral, aural, written, IT, musical, artistic and sporting.
- To ensure that students with special needs are included in all school activities.
- To be aware that all students are gifted and that students special talents are recognised and celebrated.
- Students with special education needs are entitled to access to, participation in and benefit from Education.

### Objectives

The educational objectives for students with special education needs are the same for all students.

- To identify clearly the strengths and needs of each student through information systematically gathered from the primary schools, parents, psychological reports, meetings with the student, formal and informal assessments and regular feedback from all subject teachers.
- To address the particular needs; - numeracy, literacy, social skills by providing supplementary teaching, additional support and resources where possible.

- To devise a suitable programme of learning based on identified needs.
- To promote collaboration among teachers in teaching special needs/ learning support programmes.
- To support mainstream teachers in teaching special needs students in mainstream classes.
- To support parents in their role as primary educators.
- To review and evaluate learning programmes and methodologies, adjust as necessary, and store all relevant records and reports.

## Assessment

Assessments from primary schools are used to determine whether students need learning support (L.S.) are allocated resource hours. The school management applies annually to the National Council For Special Education (N.C.S.E.) for continuation of allocated resource hours granted in accordance with the student's individual needs. Further assessments take place in term one where the student's verbal and numerical abilities are examined using Drumcondra Primary Reading/Mathematics Tests. Reading age is determined using GAP test or NARA (Neale Analysis of Reading Ability) test. The L.S. and career guidance teachers administer these tests. The school operates a mixed ability class placement policy in junior classes and student assessment details are used to assist in the identification of possible difficulties. Further informal screening takes place and a programme of work is planned and prepared in consultation with parents/guardians. The student may be referred to National Educational Psychological Service (N.E.P.S.)

## Models of Organisation

After formal and informal screening individual profiles and learning programmes are compiled and put in place in consultation with student, subject teachers, special education needs co-coordinator and parents. As the need arises these programmes are altered/ revised. The following are taken into account when the individual programme is being drawn up.

- Student profile.
- Assessment results.
- Progress to date.
- Strengths and needs.
- Psychological reports (if available).

The school is awaiting further directions from the Department of Education and Science on the development and implementation of Individual Education Plans (I.E.Ps). Our learning support classes are formed on an individual or small group basis. Students are withdrawn from class at times appropriate to students' timetable. Students are selected for additional support on the basis of:

- Psychological reports.
- Allocated resource hours.
- Reports from feeder primary school.
- Drumcondra Primary Reading / Mathematics tests.
- Request from parents/guardians.
- Request from student.

## Key Personnel involved in Learning Support/Special Needs

### 1. School Principal

- Applies for all additional hours for students
- Allocates Learning Support/Special Needs hours to teachers.

### 2. Deputy Principal

- Arranges reasonable accommodation for Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate examinations.
- Applies for Special Concessions for students who require it.
- Applies for grants and appropriate equipment required for individual students.

### 3. Board of Management

- The B.O.M. ensures that policies and practices in school are inclusive of all students and in compliance with legislation.

### 4. Guidance Counsellor

- Offers guidance and counselling to all students.
- Assists L.S. teacher in administering Drumcondra Primary English / Mathematics tests.

### 5. Learning Support Co-ordinator

- Ensures students with special needs are catered for in the school.
- Helps the Principal to organise adequate support for students based on screening assessments and tests.
- Liaises with the teachers involved in resource teaching.
- Co-ordinates the collection and storage of individual resource plans.

### 6. Special Needs Assistants

- Special Needs Assistants care for students with special needs. This involves supporting the student in practical classes, helping to organise books and other general activities.

### 7. Parents/Guardians

- Parental involvement is essential. Parents/Guardians are contacted and consulted at regular intervals.

### 8. Other Teachers

- Teachers, who are not learning support teachers, may be timetabled to take single pupils for resource classes every week.

## Developing inclusive curriculum (Teaching and Learning).

The Department of Education and Science dictates the schools curriculum. Emphasis is placed on the developing of key skills such as creative problem solving, creative writing, critical thinking and higher order thinking skills designed primarily for the acquisition of knowledge and cognitive skills. Our school ensures the same quality of educational experience for all students irrespective of ability or need and ensure that all have access to a broad and balanced curriculum commensurate with their talents and abilities.

Our curriculum is delivered in a way that provides...

- A variety of learning and teaching materials.
- A variety of teaching strategies and approaches e.g team teaching.
- Multi-sensory approaches; the use of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic aids.
- Differentiation in the level of questioning/testing of students is also used.

## Continuing Professional Development

Our school believes in a whole school approach to the education of students with special educational needs. Members of staff who have experience and training are involved in supporting other teachers through a variety of means such as peer-mentoring, co-operative teaching and responding to teachers requests for support.

A support structure is provided for newly appointed teachers and all teachers are informed of opportunities for ongoing professional development and support.

## Staff Support and Development

The learning support teacher attends the annual I.L.S.A conference and other appropriate in-service days.

## Bullying and Harassment

**In Scoil Mhuire teachers are ever vigilant for signs of bullying and are encouraged to report it to the relevant authority e.g. class teacher. Bullying incidents are treated sensitively. Incidents of bullying are dealt with as per the schools Anti-Bullying Policy (see attached).**

## Other Agencies

Scoil Mhuire liaises with a combination of the following N.E.P.S, social welfare agencies, S.E.N.O (Special Education Needs Officer), Physiotherapists, Visiting Teacher for Travellers and Visiting Teacher for the Deaf and other relevant agencies. Sensitive information is confined to key personnel.

## Transition from Primary School.

In February an Open Evening is organised for incoming students from feeder schools, a further night is organised in May. At these times parents often make contact with Principal or L.S. teacher concerning their anxieties (re L.S.). If a child is assessed in

primary school the Principal is encouraged to pass this information to the secondary school.

## The Exceptionally Able Student

Exceptionally able students are given information concerning summer courses/programmes for talented youth in D.C.U. They are encouraged to participate in Maths and Science Olympiads. In the classroom consideration is given to these students during class tests (differentiation in testing/answering).

## Consultation

When a student is noted as having a learning difficulty the L.S. Teacher consults with the Principal, subject teacher and then with the student to offer learning support. When a student is selected for withdrawal from class for learning support, the parents/guardians sign a consent form giving permission for the withdrawal. When necessary professional bodies/ agencies such as N.E.P.S etc. are consulted.

## Review of Special Educational Needs Policy.

The policy will be reviewed regularly by the principal, LS teacher and others involved in drawing up the original policy. It is on the basis of this policy that we successfully carry out our teaching of pupils with special educational needs. The review will be linked to Whole School Development Planning, as is the original policy.

# **School Policy re: Bullying**

## ***Section 1***

- 1 The school recognises the importance of early identification and the associated importance of awareness amongst teachers.
- 2 The school will hold a Special Assembly each year to deal with bullying and classroom courtesy.
- 3 Class tutors will address bullying with their class group.
- 4 Greater vigilance by senior classes will be encouraged.
- 5 Parents will be encouraged to report incidents of bullying.

## ***Section 2: Procedures for noting and reporting***

- 1 Confidentiality will be afforded reporters.
- 2 All students are encouraged to report incidents to class tutors or other staff.
- 3 A written record of all reports will be retained.

## ***Section 3: Investigating and dealing with bullying***

- 1 Victim and bully will be interviewed separately. Students will be alerted to the effects of unacceptable behaviour during this interview.
- 2 Parents will be involved in 2nd or further offence.
- 3 Parents of all students involved will be requested to attend a meeting if necessary.