

Special Needs Policy

Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa, Kilcloon 26.10.2007

Introductory Statement

Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa is a mainstream primary school catering for a full cross section of children. The purpose of this whole school plan for inclusive Special Needs Education is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other interested persons on the provision of effective learning support to pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties. It will assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of this child in our school. We are also fulfilling our obligations under the Education Act 1998.

Mission Statement

Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa, Kilcloon, hopes to serve all the children in our community without prejudice and we welcome our most challenged children. Their presence in our school will enrich our whole school. We will endeavour to develop each child's natural potential at his/her own rate and to his/her fullest capacity.

Aims

- 1) To outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to pupils with special needs
- 2) To outline our whole school approach to assessments and teaching in relation to pupils with special needs
- 3) To enable pupils with disabilities to share with their peers as complete as educational experience as is possible
- 4) To establish communication structures for the involvement of parents of pupils with special needs
- 5) To outline what inclusion means to our school
- 6) To bring to the attention of staff and parents the legislation in Ireland as regards special educational needs.

Inclusion

Inclusion is based on the philosophy that children with special educational needs should receive their education in the least restrictive environment possible (Autism Task Force Report, 2001). Inclusion means the school makes every effort to accommodate the needs of the child. Inclusion in ordinary schools is the best preparation for an integrated life. Children with special educational needs have to learn to live with others in society and lead a life that is as independent as possible.

The challenge of inclusion is to find the best way of accommodating the child's unique learning style to facilitate the student's access to the curriculum.

Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa favours inclusion.

- We value all students and staff equally
- When the need arises, we restructure the practices in the school so that they respond to the diversity of all students.
- Reduce barriers to learning and participation for all students.
- Acknowledge the right of students to an education in their locality
- Recognise that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.

Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa aims to provide an optimum learning environment for all pupils. To enhance learning for all students:

- Teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind
- Lessons encourage the participation of all students.
- Students are actively involved in their own learning
- Students learn collaboratively
- Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect
- Teachers plan, teach and review in partnership with other teachers and parents

Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa strives to provide a safe and comfortable environment for all pupils.

- Ensure safe access to all areas of the classroom and school for all students
- Ensure adequate heating and lighting in all areas

Enrolment of children with Special Needs

When an application for the enrolment of a child is received the Board of Management will:

- a) Request a copy of the child's medical or psychological report or where such a report is not available to request that the child be assessed immediately. The purpose of the assessment report is to assist the school in establishing the educational needs of the child relevant to his/her disability or special needs and to profile the support services required.
- b) The Board, having received the report will assess how the school could meet the needs specified in the report
- c) If the Board deems that further resources are required, it will, prior to enrolment, request the Department of Education and Science to provide the resources required to meet the needs of the child as outlined in the psychological or medical report.
- d) The school will meet with the parents of the child to discuss the child's needs and the school's suitability or capability in meeting those needs
- e) It may be necessary for the Board of Management to decide to defer enrolment pending:
 - o The receipt of an assessment report and/or
 - o The provision of appropriate resources by the Department of Education and Science to meet the needs specified in the Psychological and/or medical report

Priority for Learning Support

- 1) Early intervention in Senior Infants and 1st class
- 2) After early intervention, priority for Learning support is given to those pupils who perform at or below the 12th percentile in English or Mathematics excluding pupils who have resource teaching hours already allocated. This is based on the Drumcondra Test results in English and Mathematics in all classes from 1st to 6th.

- 3) Those children about whom teachers are concerned are further screened by the Special Education Teacher.
- 4) In the case of pupils performing at or below the 12th percentile the screening process is followed by a consultative meeting between the class teacher and the parents concerning the pupils performance and supplementary teaching is offered. If parents agree they will sign a form of acceptance. The Special Education Teacher will later phone or meet with the parents to introduce themselves prior to beginning supplementary teaching with the pupil. If at any stage the teacher or parents decide to discontinue this tuition they will sign a form agreeing that the pupil will discontinue supplementary teaching.

Identification Screening & Referral Procedures

- In Junior Infants pupils are screened using teacher observation. The Special Education Teachers carry out the 'Early Literacy Test' towards the end of the year.
- In Senior Infants pupils are screened using teacher observation, word lists. The M.I.S.T is administered by the Special Education Teacher at the end of the child's 5th term in school.
- The "Drumcondra Tests", in English and Mathematics are administered in May each year from 1st to 6th class teachers.
- Standardised tests in English and Mathematics are done each year with 1st and 4th class. The results are available for inspection by the Department of Education as is obligatory. The tests we use are the "Drumcondra Tests". These results are also available for any parents of these children to view on request.

Referral for Assessment

- 1) A class teacher or parent may have concerns about a child. The Special Education Teacher will then administer diagnostic tests. The class teacher and Special Education Teacher will then draw up an educational plan for the child within the class.
- 2) If the short-term plan fails to achieve the desired outcome, then the child will receive additional help from the Special Education Teacher. The Special Education Teacher, class teacher and parents will draw up an Individual Educational Plan.

- 3) If there are concerns after one term, then, with the parents' permission the child will be referred for a private assessment with the NEPS psychologist.
- 4) Pupils who display major behavioural or emotional difficulties may be referred for assessment.

Children who have physical difficulties, e.g. deafness, sight impairment, downs syndrome, cerebral palsy may receive supplementary teaching.

Referral to Out of School Agencies.

- The teacher with the special needs post co-ordinates the referral of pupils to outside agencies e.g. Educational Psychologist
- The class teacher meets with the parents to discuss the need for the referral and to seek consent
- The class teacher completes the necessary referral forms in consultation with the appropriate school personnel and parents
- The external professional meets with the principal, class teacher, parents and others involved in the child's education and an assessment is conducted.
- The findings are discussed, recommendations are considered.
- The report is then submitted to the Special Education Needs Organiser (S.E.N.O)

Organisation of Supplementary Teaching

The primary work of the Special Education Teacher is the provision of supplementary teaching to pupils identified as needing support.

One to one teaching may be provided where small group teaching has not been effective, children with particular special needs i.e. low incidence receive 1:1 tuition in accordance with specific hours allocated to them. Those children who have needs in social skills will be taken as part of a group also.

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 Special Education Teacher will decide this. They will also devise an Individual Educational Plan or Group Education Plan. The Individual Education Plan is also drawn up in consultation with parents and other professionals involved with the child e.g. speech and language therapist, occupational therapist etc. The Special Education Teacher and class teacher will meet with parents to discuss the child's progress in light of the review, which takes place annually.

Collaboration with the class teacher is essential and together a system will be decided where the child can have genuine access to the mainstream curriculum.

Timetabling for Supplementary Teaching

- 1) In conjunction with the class teachers the Special Education Teachers will draw up a timetable for children with special needs
- 2) If a child is withdrawn from the class, a flexible approach to timetabling is adopted by the class teacher so that the child does not miss out on the same curricular each day. Children should also participate in all extracurricular activities with their peers in the mainstream class
- 3) Where there is collaboration in the classroom a time is allocated that is suitable to both parties
- 4) A decision is made as to when consultation and planning takes place
- 5) Time may be spent providing support to the teacher by assisting with modifications to the curriculum content, developing alternative resources and setting up student support networks in the classroom
- 6) The provision of supplementary teaching is in addition to the regular class teaching in English and Maths and English language support where applicable
- 7) When finalised copies of the timetable should be available to the principle teacher and the class teachers concerned.

Time for Planning

At present each Friday afternoon is allocated for planning, review and consultation with class teachers and parents and other professionals involved.

Homework

If the Special Education Teachers are giving homework to pupils, this should be co-ordinated with the class teacher in order to avoid a situation of homework overload. However, it is important to define the purpose of homework and to agree a strategy with the class teachers

The Role of the Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching. In supporting the development and implementation of the school plan. The Special Education Teacher and the class teacher should:

- Implement teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all pupils
- Implement the school policy on screening by administering and scoring of appropriate tests
- For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching to collaborate with the Special Education Teacher in the development of an I.E.P by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve these targets
- For each child who has been allocated specific hours by the Department of Education, classroom programmes are adjusted in line with the agreed learning targets and activities.

The role of the Special Education Teacher

- Helps to provide an education which meets the needs and abilities of children assessed as having difficulties.
- Advises and liaises with other teachers, parents and other professionals in the children's interests
- Has responsibility for developing an individual educational programme or group educational programme in consultation with the class teacher, parents and other partners in education for pupils who are selected for supplementary teaching.
- Assesses and records the needs and progress of the children in receipt of supplementary teaching
- Sets specific, time related targets for each child agreed by class teacher and parents
- Provides teaching, especially in English and Mathematics to pupils who experience low achievement in accordance with the school's selection criteria
- Direct teaching of the child, either in a separate room or within the mainstream class
- Team teaching when the child concerned will derive benefit from it
- Provide detailed information to the principal with regard to the child's progress, I.E.P and meetings with parents
- Trace the progress of pupils who have discontinued supplementary teaching.

- Pupil profiles, psychological reports and relevant records are kept in a filing cabinet in the room in which the Special Education Teacher is based and copies are also kept in the Principal's office.

Submissions to the National Council for Special Education

When a child is in need of psychological assessments the following guidelines will be followed.

- 1) Consultation with the parents
- 2) Parents will complete and sign Form 1 – Parent's/Guardian's consent form
- 3) Parents and teachers will complete Form 2 – Pupil Referral Form
- 4) After the assessment the school will receive a psychological report
- 5) New Applications for:
 - Access to Low Incidence Hours teaching
 - Special needs assistant
 - School transport
 - Assistive technology

will be processed by the National Council for Special Education through the local Special Educational Needs Organiser (S.E.N.O)

S.E.N.O

National Council for Special Education, C/o North East Regional Office, Department of Education & Science, 7 Trimgate Street, Navan, Co Meath. Telephone: (046) 9093799

- a) If the application is in relation to specific or general learning disability a full psychological report is submitted.
- b) If the application is in relation to specific speech and language disability, a psychological report and speech and language therapist's report is submitted
- c) If the application is in relation to emotional and behavioural disability, evidence that the child is receiving treatment for this disability is submitted
- d) If the application is for S.N.A support, a description of the child's behaviour and of the support that the S.N.A will provide for the child is submitted. The relevant professional report is also submitted.

Parental confirmation is obtained in relation to any of these applications.

Individual Educational Plan or Group Educational Plan

The Individual Educational Plan/Group Educational Plan will address the pupil's full range of needs and will include:

- Details from 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
- Home support activities
- Supplementary support activities to include ICT

Each plan will be monitored through teacher observation and the keeping of planning and progress records and through the pupil's own feedback. A detailed review will take place annually. The teachers involved will meet the parents to discuss the child's progress in the light of the review and the I.E.P is adjusted accordingly.

Partnership with Parents

Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa believes that partnership between home and school is important because with positive and active partnership the child gets the best that the school can offer. We are aware that children do better and are happier when parents and teachers work closely together and when parents are able to give their children support at home. We therefore:

- Give a warm welcome to parents
- Give encouragement
- Emphasise strengths as well as needs
- Involve parents in drawing up the Individual Educational Plan
- Encourage parents to express fears or doubts that they may have
- Meet with parents at parent/teacher meetings. This can be parent and Special Education Teacher or parent, class teacher and Special Education Teacher

- Parents will be invited to certain educational visits, school open days, concerts or events in which the child is taking part
- Keep the parents informed about achievements and progress
- Encourage the parents to keep regular communication with the class teacher and Special Education Teacher
- Encourage them to create a home environment where literacy can thrive
- Guidelines for parents on how to support their child with homework
- Parents are invited to meet the Special Education Teacher as needed as input from home is vital if progress is to be made

Co-ordination of all Special Needs Personnel, including Special Needs Assistants and Visiting Teacher.

We are aware that there is an increasing need to look at ways of promoting partnership and collaboration between teachers, between teachers and classroom assistants and between teachers, parents and other professionals.

Our aim is to work as a team for the benefit of all the children in our care. We work together to find solutions to problems that arise. We propose to:

- 1) Meet on a regular basis to set goals for the children we work with. This involves a consensus on purpose and goals
- 2) We will value each person's contribution equally
- 3) Each person will have a role in carrying out tasks and decision making
- 4) Shared responsibility for the outcomes
- 5) Decide on resources and share the resources if they will be of benefit to the child
- 6) Working together to provide relevant curricula
- 7) Devise various strategies and practices to enable students with diverse learning needs to participate in the mainstream curriculum.

Through discussion it will be decided who will teach a skill to the student. Progress will be monitored. If there is some aspect of the goal or instruction that needs to be changed, we will meet to decide on a new strategy.

Collaboration with Special Needs Assistants (SNA)

Special Needs Assistants may work with small groups or help individuals who require assistance, while still maintaining a supportive role with regard to the pupil they have a responsibility for.

- 1) The SNA and class teacher will plan for the individual needs of the child
- 2) The SNA will be given clear instruction on her role
- 3) The SNA will be involved in tracking progress, record keeping and observation
- 4) They will be involved in planning for the individual student
- 5) Clear direction will be given to the SNA but there will be room for the SNA to take initiative appropriately.

Liaison with Special Needs Personnel, Class Teachers and Parents

- 1) A meeting will take place
 - a) To draw up an I.E.P
 - b) To adjust it accordingly
- 2) The meeting will take place on a Friday afternoon in the resource room or learning support room at a time that is suitable to all parties
- 3) The class will be supervised by the teacher in the adjoining room
- 4) Short meetings may take place during the term. These meetings will be organised by the class teacher and resource teacher or learning support teacher
- 5) Informal discussion about a child's progress will be encouraged

When planning the I.E.P it will be decided as to whether the child will receive in-class support or support in the resource room. If it is in-class support it will be decided as to what method will be of benefit to the child, for example, parallel teaching, team teaching, station teaching or alternative teaching.

Regular short meetings will be of help throughout the year to evaluate and plan, and to make modifications to the curriculum where necessary.

Liason with External Professionals and Agencies

School Psychologist

Identification of pupils needing psychological assessments will be largely based on teacher observation and results of tests carried out during the school year. The resource teacher, class teacher and parents will meet with the psychologist before or/and after the assessment. The psychologist identifies the child's problem and highlights the areas where the child needs special help. If an Individual Educational Plan is not working for a child the school psychologist may be contacted for help and guidance. The school psychologist may be invited to assist with the development of screening programmes and providing in service to our staff. We may also seek their advice on classroom strategies and resources and supporting specialist teachers.

Speech and Language Therapist

As a staff we have developed a good working relationship with the Speech and Language Therapists in Baggot Street Hospital. The class teachers and resource teachers will continue to work with them and continue to receive their expert help and guidance. Their visits to our school are very beneficial in supporting a child with speech and language difficulties. The resource teachers usually instigate the visits.

For children with visual or hearing impairments it is important to seek the advice and help from outside agencies. For both groups language and social skills may be affected. An external professional can guide the school to technology that will be of benefit e.g. the pupil with poor vision may need optical and video aids to enable them to participate in regular class activities. For a child with a hearing problem the visiting teacher can give expert advice and help e.g. where the pupil's desk is situated in the room as well as one to one tuition.

In consultation with the relevant specialists the learning support teacher, resource teacher and class teacher will draw up a learning plan, which includes identification of any additional resources that are considered necessary in order to implement the plan. The parents will be fully informed. This plan will be subject to review every term leading to revisions of the I.E.P and referral for specialist review as necessary.

Maintenance of Database and Record Keeping and the Dissemination of Information to Relevant Personnel throughout the school.

- 1) The teacher with responsibility for testing will order and distribute test booklets to the class teacher. Staff will agree on when to administer the tests.
- 2) When tests are corrected a copy of the results will be returned to the designated teacher. If there is a concern about a child, the designated person will organise a meeting with the class teacher, learning support teacher and any other personnel assigned to support the child. They will discuss the findings and develop an individual plan to support the child.
- 3) Children's scores will be compared to previous years. Further testing on children may take place. Class teachers will be informed of the findings.
- 4) Results of tests will be stored in filing cabinets in the resource room. The principal and resource teachers have access to the cabinet. Results will be available to teachers if they need this information.
- 5) Each child attending resource will have an individual file. Results of tests, I.E.P.s and records of progress will be kept in this file. These records will be kept for seven years after the child has completed Primary School.
- 6) Results of psychological assessments will be kept in the Principal's office. If a teacher needs information concerning a child in her class, the assessment is made available to her/him but cannot be removed from the school. A teacher cannot photocopy any psychological assessment.

Fulfilling a Consultative Role for School Management

The Board of Management, Principal and teachers are committed to provide the best possible educational service to pupils with Special Educational Needs. To ensure this, the resource teachers will encourage:

- A close level of co-operation between parents, class teacher and any other school personnel assigned to support the child
- Discuss previous assessment reports of new school entrants with disabilities and give practical recommendations as how best to meet the needs of the child
- Communication with outside agencies, for example, speech and language therapists, teacher for the deaf, psychologist etc.
- Buying or advising on materials for S.E.N children
- Discussing and advising management on specialized equipment, for example, computer software and computer hardware – modifying the keyboard and mouse, electronic communication aids and radio aids
- Keep management informed on diagnostic tests that have been administered and results of these tests
- Consult with the principal and class teachers on the selection of pupils for psychological assessment.
- Contribute to school policy development.

Fulfilling a Consultative Role for Teaching Colleagues

Successful implementation of consultative practices require resource teachers to adopt new roles as well as working directly with pupils. These roles fall in the domain of communication and planning, problem solving, instruction and dissemination of information. These functions will include:

- Discussing the student's progress
- Sharing diagnostic testing information
- Participating in collaborative long and short-term planning
- Meeting with parents and class teachers to write an I.E.P and to guide parents as to how to support the child at home
- Provide in-service instruction (time allocated at staff meetings).
- Sharing literature and sharing checklists to aid teachers in identifying students with special educational needs
- Suggest alternative teaching strategies or recommend supplementary teaching materials.
- Involvement in school planning so that the needs of S.E.N children are incorporated into the plan.

Irish Reports, Bills and Acts

The Report of the Primary Education Review Body (1990) confirmed that the policy of the Department of Education was one of integration/inclusion of children with special educational needs. Where this was not possible, they saw the need for segregation. The report also recognised that successful integration requires substantial funding of regular schools in order to provide the necessary back up resources.

The Special Education Review Committee Report. SERC (1993)

The 1993 Special Education Review Committee Report (SERC) provided a study on special education in Ireland. It included a wide range of difficulties and disabilities with the term special educational needs. It defined children with special educational needs as including all those "whose disabilities and/or circumstances prevent or hinder them from benefiting adequately from the education which is normally provided for students of the same age, or for whom the education which can generally be provided in the mainstream classroom is not sufficiently challenging" (SERC, Page 18)

It favoured integration where it was appropriate with as little segregation as possible. The SERC Report advocated a continuum of provision for a continuum of needs. Special schools were seen as necessary for some children but inclusion was to be encouraged.

In 1995 the white paper Charting Our Educational Future saw integration as the way forward. It saw the need for flexibility and movement between mainstream and special schools. It also stated that special schools should provide support for teachers and students with special needs in the mainstream school. As yet this has not happened.

Education Act (1998)

The Education Act (1998) gave students with special educational needs the right to education as all other students are entitled to. Under this act there is a statutory duty on the Minister for Education and Science to ensure that “there is made available to each person, including each person with disability or special needs, support services and a level of quality of education appropriate to meeting the needs and abilities of that person” (P.10)

Under the Education Act, schools must identify and provide for the educational needs of all students. Schools can no longer refuse admission to a child with SEN without clear reasons. Section 15 obliges schools to have an admission policy for the admission of students with special needs. It made no reference to Individual Educational Plans. Section 15 also states that schools must make reasonable provision and accommodation for students with SEN.

Section 9 deals with identification of and provision for children with SEN. It also deals with entitlement to education appropriate to their needs.

The Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill 2002

The main provisions in this Bill were:

- The setting up of a register of children with special education
- The establishment of a Special Educational Council
- The preparation of educational plans, and appeals of educational plans
- The creation of a new role of special needs organisers

Under this act schools will have to devise Individual Educational Plans. The Principal has the authority to ensure that the plan is reviewed at least once a year.

The content of the educational plan must include:

- The child's abilities, strengths and talents
- The nature and degree of the child's disability
- The child's educational attainment
- The educational needs of the child
- The supports that will be put in place to help the child reach her goals
- The supports that will be put in place to help the child make the transition from primary to secondary school
- The learning targets which the child is to achieve over a period not exceeding one year
- The Bill also gives the parents the right to appeal against the content of the education plan

Appendixes

Gathering information for IEP Planning

Summary of information on pupil:

Name of Pupil:

Date of Birth: _____

_____ *Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa*

Class: _____

<i>Information from Parents/caregivers</i>	<i>Information from class teacher</i>
<i>Information from ABA Tutor</i>	<i>Information from Special Needs Assistant</i>

<i>Information from Pupil</i>	<i>Information from Physiotherapist</i>
<i>Information from Psychologist</i>	<i>Information from Speech & Language Therapist</i>

<i>Information from others involved with pupil</i>	<i>Information from Occupational Therapist</i>

Individual Education Plan

Name:	Date of Birth:	Class:
Address:	Telephone:	Teacher:
	People involved in constructing this I.E.P	Sp. Ed. Teacher:
		Meeting Date:
		Commencement Date:
		Review:

Summary of information available:

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Needs</i>
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Priority Learning Needs:

<i>Learning Targets for Period</i>	<i>Date Achieved</i>
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Activities/Resources:

Other Staff:

Home:

Individual Education Plan 1

<i>Name:</i>	<i>Special Education Teachers</i>
<i>Class:</i>	<i>Target Period:</i>
<i>Date of Birth:</i>	<i>Review Date:</i>
<i>Class Teacher:</i>	<i>Other:</i>

Learning Targets

Learning Support Activities and Resources:

Information Available:

Strengths/Needs

