



**St. Joseph's National School**

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**Roll Number 17127S**

# **Inclusive and Special Education Policy**

## **2025**

### **Introduction:**

This policy was drafted by the School Leadership Team of St. Joseph's National School Hacketstown. The policy takes cognisance of directives contained in the Education Act (1998), the EPSEN Act (2004), *Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* (DES 2024) and Circular 0063/24 (DES, 2024). Monitoring of this policy shall be ongoing, as the school's profile will change from year to year.

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Inclusive and Special Education Policy St. Joseph's National School

## **1.0 Context**

St. Joseph's National School is a large, Catholic, mixed rural school. We have six mainstream classes and two Autism Classes. Our enrolment is approximately 150 children.

## **2.0 Inclusive Education in St. Joseph's National School**

St. Joseph's N.S. has adopted a whole-school approach to inclusion. A positive ethos and learning environment is encouraged, whereby all students, including those with special educational and additional needs, feel welcome and experience a sense of community and belonging.

The school community promotes the active engagement of each student in their learning and in the life of the school. There is a commitment to developing students' academic, social, emotional and independent living skills coupled with a focus on high aspirations and improving outcomes for all.

## **3.0 Aims of Special Education Support**

- To promote inclusion of, and provide support to, students identified with special educational and additional needs by offering appropriate forms of education provision and the most efficient use of available resources.
- To identify pupils with special educational and additional needs as early and thoroughly as possible using a variety of means and in consultation with appropriate personnel.

## **4.0 The Continuum of Support**

In St. Joseph's National School we employ a staged approach to supporting students. The NEPS Continuum of Support provides a structure for this.

*Stage 1: Classroom Support (Support for All)*

In order to proactively support students, a number of interventions are in place to address additional needs in the areas of numeracy, literacy, social and emotional learning and development.

Such interventions include:

- Differentiation by product, instruction, resource, support and time given to complete tasks.
- Co-teaching within the mainstream classrooms.
- Specific programmes such as Mata sa Rang, Literacy Lift Off, Reading Recovery etc.
- School designed initiatives focusing on areas such as oral language, writing genres, problem solving, handwriting etc.

Where specific concerns remain regarding a student's learning or social development, following engagement with some of the above interventions, the classroom teacher in consultation with the SET will arrange to meet with parents/guardians. At this meeting, a Classroom Support Checklist will be completed. This will be used to inform the next stage of the process. The Student Support File will be opened at the Classroom Support stage.

#### Stage II: School Support (Support for Some)

If intervention is considered necessary at Stage II, then the student will be referred to the SET, with parents' permission, for further assessment and/or diagnostic testing. If this assessment suggests that support teaching would be beneficial, this will be arranged. The parents and the classroom teacher will be involved with the SET in drawing up the School Support Plan (formerly referred to as an Individual Education Plan), which will include appropriate interventions for implementation in the home, in the classroom and during support teaching. After an agreed period of time, the SET and the classroom teacher, in consultation with parents/guardians, will review the rate of progress of each student receiving support teaching. If significant concerns remain, then it may be necessary to provide interventions at Stage III.

In the case of students with emotional or behavioural difficulties it is recognised that, in certain circumstances, more urgent action may be required. In these cases the student's needs will, with parents' permission, be discussed with the relevant NEPS psychologist and/or the case will be referred to the clinical services of the Health Services Executive. This may lead to a more detailed behavioural management programme, to be implemented at home and in class, or to a referral for further specialist assessment (Stage III).

#### Stage III: School Support Plus (Support for a few)

Some students who continue to present with significant learning needs will require more intensive intervention at Stage III. The school may formally request a consultation and, where appropriate, an assessment of need from a specialist outside the school in respect of students with learning difficulties or with mild and/or moderate behavioural problems who have failed to progress at Stage II. Such specialist advice may be sought from psychologists, paediatricians, speech and language therapists, audiologists, etc.

The classroom teacher and the SET, in consultation with the relevant specialist(s), will then draw up a learning programme that includes identification of any additional resources that are considered necessary in order to implement the programme. *The parents will be fully consulted with throughout this process.* This programme will be

the subject of regular reviews, leading to revisions of the learning programme and referral for specialist review, as necessary.

### **5.0 Student Support File**

When a teacher or parent expresses concern about a student, a Student Support File is opened at Stage I of the Continuum of Support. The Student Support File allows the school to track the student's pathway through the Continuum of Support – from the start of the support process, and onwards, if necessary, through to School Support (for some) and School Support Plus (for a few).

#### **Contents of the Student Support File:**

- a. Student details
- b. Results of standardised and diagnostic tests
- c. Log of actions
- d. Support checklist
- e. School Support Plan (See section 5.1)
- f. Support Review Record

### **5.1 School Support Plan (SSP)**

At the beginning of a term of support teaching, planning will be based on the individual needs of the student. Once support teaching has begun, the records and evaluations of support teaching sessions are used as a basis for on-going planning, teaching, learning and assessment.

The SSP is the responsibility of the class teacher and the SET. It is written in consultation with the parents. The SSP is used to record relevant information relating to a student's learning attainments and his/her learning strengths and needs. Any SSPs pertaining to students with SNA access must include a care plan. This is written by the class teacher in consultation with the SNA and parents/guardians.

St. Joseph's National School adopts an inclusive approach to the education of children with special educational and additional needs. As per the EPSEN Act 2004, which outlines that "students with SEN should be educated in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of their needs is inconsistent with the best interest of the child or the effective provision of education for students with whom the child is to be educated". This means that children from the Autism classes go into the appropriate mainstream classes daily, for subjects that the individual child is able to participate meaningfully in, without causing significant disruption to the teaching and learning of all the pupils. To facilitate this the student, his/her Autism Class teacher, the mainstream classroom teacher, parents, the Special Education Teacher and the school principal along with any other relevant people such as guardians, educational psychologists, occupational and speech and language therapists are included in the process, where practicable. Other students who have additional needs and are in a mainstream class will also have an SSP in place with the help of the same people.

SSPs are put in place for existing students in October. All SSPs will be reviewed in February of the following year

#### **The SSP includes:**

- a. Student details
- b. Student's strengths and interests

- c. Priority concerns
- d. Possible reasons for concerns/Impact of SEN on educational development
- e. Targets for the student
- f. Strategies to help student achieve the targets
- g. Staff involved and resources needed
- h. Signatures of parents/guardians and teachers
- i. Care plan (students with SNA access)

## **6.0 Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

Supporting learning is the collaborative responsibility of all. It is envisaged that the Board of Management, Principal, Mainstream Classroom Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Parents/Guardians and children will all contribute to the development and implementation of the school's policy on Inclusive and Special Education.

### **6.1 The Board of Management**

The Board of Management has an important role in developing, supporting and monitoring school policy on Inclusive and Special Education. The Board of Management will discharge this responsibility as per Circular 0064/24 and the Education Act (1998).

*The Board of Management shall:*

- Oversee the development, implementation and review of the Inclusive and Special Education Policy.
- Ensure that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the Special Education Teachers.
- Provide a secure filing cabinets and a secure data facility for storage of records relating to all students until the student reaches the age of twenty-five or until notified otherwise by the DES. All students data are recorded electronically on Aladdin and parents/guardians have access to this at all times.

### **6.2 The Principal Teacher**

*'The principal has overall responsibility for the school's Special Education programme and for the operation of services for children with special educational needs'.*

(Circular 0064/24) .

The Education Act (1998) and the EPSEN Act (2004) have all reiterated this responsibility.

*In St. Joseph's National School, the principal teacher:*

- Assumes overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policy on Inclusive and Special Education in co-operation with the classroom teachers and SETs.
- Monitors the implementation of the school policy on Inclusive and Special Education on an ongoing basis.
- Monitors the identification of students for support teaching.

- Oversees the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify students with special educational and additional needs so that these students can be provided with the support they need.
- Encourages continuous professional development of the staff to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of inclusive and special education.
- Informs teachers about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed for initial referrals.
- It is considered best practice for the principal to meet with the SENCO, who is the co-ordinator of the SET team, regularly to review progress and implementation of the policy (meetings will be typically held during the months of October, February and May).

### **6.3 The Special Education Co-ordinator**

The SENCO fills the role of co-ordinating inclusive and special education in St. Joseph's National School. The co-ordinator oversees the day-to-day operation of the support teaching programme, however final responsibility rests with the principal.

#### *The co-ordinator of Special Education:*

- Maintains a list of students who are in receipt of special education.
- Helps to co-ordinate the caseloads, timetables and work schedules of the Special Education Teachers and SNAs.
- Liaises with external agencies such as psychological services to arrange assessments, reviews and referrals.
- Liaises with parents and organises consultations and appointments with support agencies.
- Liaises specifically with NCSE in relation to the acquisition of assistive technology, SNA assistance, etc.
- Liaises with the staff of St. Joseph's National School in relation to transfer of documentation/reports pertaining to students at transfer.
- Aids the principal with the completion of the process of application for exemption from Irish in accordance with Circular 12/96.
- Is responsible for the purchase of materials and resources used by SETs.
- Is responsible for standardised testing in the school by facilitating testing which includes the supply of materials, timetabling, and directing correction.
- Ensures that all members of staff are familiar with and adopt the staged approach to the Continuum of Support.

### **6.4 The Classroom Teacher**

The classroom teacher:

- Has primary responsibility for the education, progress and care of all students in his/her classroom, including students with special educational and additional needs. It is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to ensure that each student is taught in a stimulating and supportive classroom environment where all students feel equal and valued.
- May gather information through formal and informal means, in line with Continuum of Support Guidelines, with a view to informing interventions. In particular the classroom teacher has responsibility for initiating the Continuum of Support in consultation with the SET and parents.
- Has shared responsibility with the SET teacher for the compilation of the SSPs for children in their care.
- Will make specific accommodations and develop a programme of differentiated instruction for students who present with difficulties in the areas of academic progression, application, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers.
- Has a central role in identifying and responding to students with special educational and additional needs, including differentiating the curriculum as appropriate. These responses will be informed and assisted in collaboration with colleagues, parents/guardians and others such as the school's NEPS psychologist, and the local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO).

## **6.5 The Special Education Teacher (SET)**

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. Depending on the learning needs identified, a student with special educational and additional needs may be supported at classroom level through a variety of team-teaching approaches or, alternatively, through withdrawal support models. Withdrawal may be on an individual or small group basis. The SET will regularly consult with both the classroom teacher and parents throughout the Continuum of Support.

In implementing the School Support Plan, the SETs will:

- Collaborate with the classroom teacher in the maintenance of a School Support Plan (SSP) for each student who is selected for support teaching.
- Maintain a monthly record (Cúntas Míosúil) of work for each individual or group of students in receipt of support teaching through withdrawal.

- Maintain short term plans for each individual or group in receipt of support teaching.
- Collaboratively create a team-teaching plan with the classroom teacher.
- Liaise with the Special Education Co-ordinator to arrange special provision for students with special educational and additional needs.
- Under the guidance of the SET co-ordinator administer a range of formal and informal assessments and maintain records of the outcome of those assessments which are used to inform planning.
- Co-ordinate the implementation of the identification procedure for support teaching as detailed in this policy.
- Contribute to the review and development of the policy for Inclusive and Special Education at whole school level.
- Contribute at school level to decision making regarding the purchase of learning resources, books and materials. Responsibility for the purchase of materials rests with the Special Education Co-ordinator.

## **6.6 Parents**

Parents contribute to the initial diagnostic assessment by sharing insights into their child's development and learning difficulties, by discussing the outcomes of the assessment and by contributing to the selection of learning targets and associated activities based on the child's needs.

Where a child is in receipt of support teaching from a Special Education Teacher, the parents/guardians:

- Participate in the development of the child's SSP.
- Discuss their child's progress with the classroom teacher and Special Education Teacher and in cases where support teaching is to be continued, discuss the revised learning targets and activities in their child's SSP.
- Implement suggested home-based activities outlined in the child's SSP.

## **6.7 Students with Special Educational and Additional Needs**

A student in receipt of support teaching should, where appropriate:

- Be an active participant in developing his/her own School Support Plan and become familiar with the learning targets that have been set for him/her.
- Contribute to the evaluation of his/her progress by participating in assessment activities, including self-assessment and conferencing.

## **7.0 Procedure for Identifying Students Requiring Support**

The following identification procedure encompasses all current guidelines and general

good practice which are informed by Circular 0064/2024.

Circular 0064/2024 states that additional teaching supports are allocated according to identified needs rather than being based on a diagnosis. The level and type of support reflects the specific targets of individual students as set out in their School Support Plan and is informed by careful monitoring and regular review of progress. Following a period of intervention, some students may no longer require additional teaching supports; some may require the same level, while others may require more intensive support.

The SET team will identify students in the following groups who require support teaching:

- Students with complex special educational and additional needs (e.g. students with ASD, dyspraxia, an assessed syndrome, etc.) where such support is deemed necessary.
- Students with a specific learning difficulty (dyslexia, dyscalculia, etc.).
- Students with a physical impairment (visual, auditory, etc.).
- Students with social, emotional and/or behavioural needs, where such support is deemed necessary.
- Students identified as requiring support in literacy and numeracy, informed by standardised test results (a STEN of 3 and under), teacher observations and diagnostic tests, where appropriate.
- Students identified as exceptionally able, informed by standardised test results and teacher observations, where there are sufficient resources available to cater for this group.
  - Concerns that arise during the termly collaborative meetings between SET and classroom teacher.

## **8.0 Support Teaching**

Support teaching will be implemented in the most appropriate way, taking into account the needs of the student and/or group. This may include co-teaching and/or support through withdrawal. This decision will be made by the classroom teacher, the SET and the student's parents/guardians.

### **8.1 School support through team-teaching**

Several approaches to team-teaching are employed in order to support students. These include, but are not limited to:

- Team teaching
- Parallel teaching
- Station teaching
- Alternative teaching
- Lead and support teaching

Effective co-teaching requires the classroom teacher and the SET to co-plan, co-teach and co-assess. Regular professional conversations and reflections should take place between the classroom teacher and the SET to inform planning and teaching.

### **8.2 School support through withdrawal**

Where appropriate, students will be withdrawn to receive support teaching. Students will receive support in small groups. If deemed necessary, students may receive individual support.

## **9.0 Tracking and Recording**

DES Guidelines (2024) state that monitoring outcomes is part of a dynamic process of identification, target-setting, intervention and review, which in turn should lead to adjustments in School Support Plans.

Each student's progress is monitored using the Support Review Record (contained in the Student Support File) so that class teaching and support teaching continue to be responsive to the student's needs at all times.

## **10.0 Record Keeping**

Records are maintained on Aladdin and all class teachers have access to their own children. SETs have access to the SSP of those children with whom they work. The Principal and Deputy Principal have oversight of all pupils.

Teachers upload (i.e. Cúntas Míosúil) work completed on Aladdin. All teaching staff have access to this. The SET and Principal have access to other shared drives, which include plans for children with English as an Additional Language and Mata sa Rang etc.

Other records that provide evidence of the student's progress towards agreed learning targets include checklists, running records, samples of written work, etc. All records of this nature are stored in the SET's/mainstream teacher's classroom.

Records of a sensitive nature such as professional reports and standardised test results are stored securely in the pupil's personal file, which is locked in a filing cabinet in Principal's office classroom as per data protection regulations. Access to such professional reports is restricted to those who directly support the student.

## **11.0 Continuing/Discontinuing Support Teaching**

Where support teaching is to be extended after the agreed period, an updated School Support Plan will be developed. This is done in consultation with the Special Education Co-ordinator, classroom teacher, parents and SET and will reflect any changes that result from the Support Review Record. Each Student Support Plan will be reviewed at the end of each academic year.

Support teaching may be discontinued in the following circumstances:

- The student, on assessment, performs above a STen of 3.
- Learning targets have been sufficiently met.
- It is considered to be in the student's best interests.

Support for children will always be based on the Continuum of Support in consultation with the classroom teacher, SET and principal. Through inclusive education and team-teaching, we aim to target all children in small groups, both mixed ability and streamed.

## **12.0 Parental Engagement**

We recognise the vital role of parents as primary educators in supporting their child

and appreciate that parental engagement is a critical factor in enhancing outcomes for students with special educational and additional needs. Parents are consulted in relation to their children's needs and the strategies being implemented to support them. They are also involved in reviewing their child's progress. We recognise and respect the parent/guardian's right to choose not to avail of the recommended support for their child. In such circumstances, parents will be requested to inform the principal in writing confirming their position.

### **13.0 Timetabling**

When devising timetables for inclusion, the classroom teacher, the special class teacher and SET will ensure that all students who are withdrawn for support sufficiently experience all areas of the curriculum, in so far as is practicable. We try to provide meaningful inclusion into mainstream education for all children, we also encourage parallel inclusion between children in both our Autism Classes and we provide reverse inclusion for children who may be working in smaller groups with the help of the special class teachers e.g. Literacy Lift Off.

### **14.0 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

As all staff members have responsibility for supporting students with special educational and additional needs, it is important that all staff engage in appropriate CPD to develop the capacity of our school to meet the needs of all students.

The principal and BOM facilitate the attendance of the teachers, special class teachers and SETs at CPD courses and events, including the annual ILSA and IATSE conferences, in addition to cluster meetings arranged by the NEPS psychologist assigned to the school. SETs will provide a summary of the course content at whole staff level.

### **15.0 Reviewing the Inclusive and Special Education Policy**

A comprehensive review and revision of the elements of the Inclusive and Special Education policy will take place in 2028. This review will consider the views of the B.O.M., parents, the principal, the classroom teachers, the special class teachers and the Special Education Team. This review will be initiated by the principal.

Changes in specific practices will be made as deemed necessary on an annual basis. Modifications to practice may be made from time to time based on the child's needs and what events are happening in the school at the time. An example of this would be Christmas/ Easter Plays.

### **Ratification of policy for St. Joseph's NS**

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**Chairperson**

**Date**

**Review Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

