

## **Special Needs Policy**

### **Guiding Principles**

All our children have a right to an education, which is appropriate to them as individuals. We want all our children to feel that they are a valued part of our school community. As far as possible, therefore, it is our aim to minimise the difficulties that children may experience. We aim to achieve this by adopting three principles that are essential to developing a more inclusive curriculum.

### **Inclusion**

We are fully committed to the principle of inclusion and the good practice, which makes it possible. Our policy, as set out in this document, aims to enable children with SEN, traveller children and children whose first language is not English, to become fully integrated members of our school community. This will be achieved by careful consideration of the needs of each child and by either modifying activities or by providing support that will help the child to participate in them.

## **Three Principles for Inclusion**

### **Setting Suitable Learning Challenges**

We aim to give every child the opportunity to experience success in learning and to achieve as high a standard as possible.

### **Responding to Children's Diverse Learning Needs**

We take into account the different backgrounds, experiences, interests and strengths that influence the way in which children learn when we plan our approaches to teaching and learning.

### **Overcoming Potential Barriers to Learning and Assessment for Individuals and Groups of Children**

We recognise that a minority of children will have particular learning and assessment requirements that will create barriers to learning if we do not address them through special arrangements.

### **In making provision for children with special needs our policy objectives are:**

- To ensure that our duties, as set out in The Education Act 1998, Equal Status Act 2000, Education Welfare Act 2000 and Education for Persons with Disabilities Act 2004, are fully met, to enable children with special educational needs to join in the normal activities of the school along with children who do not have special educational needs
- To ensure that all children gain access to a broad and balanced curriculum and have an equal opportunity to receive an education that is appropriate to their needs
- To identify and assess children with special needs as early as possible – Junior Infant Screening Test (unless earlier assessment has been carried out) and Mist Test in Senior Infants
- To use our resources as efficiently and equitably as possible when assessing and meeting the special educational needs of our children
- To provide a graduated approach in order to match educational provision to children's needs
- To develop a partnership with parents/carers in order that their knowledge, views and experience can assist us in assessing and providing for their children

# St. Joseph's National School, Miltown Malbay



- To take into account the ascertainable wishes of the children concerned and, whenever possible, directly involve them in decision making in order to provide more effectively for them
- To ensure collaboration with the Department of Education & Skills in order to take effective action on behalf of children with special needs
- To ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities towards children with special needs and are able to exercise them
- To monitor our effectiveness in achieving the above objectives.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

In attempting to achieve the above objectives the BoM, Principal and staff will take all reasonable steps within the limits of the resources available to fulfil the requirements outlined in this policy document.

## **Board of Management**

The BoM will fulfil its statutory duties towards pupils with special needs. It will ensure that the provision required is an integral part of the school development plan. Members will be knowledgeable about the school's SEN provision – funding, equipment and personnel.

## **Principal – Aidan Looney**

The Principal has overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of provision. S/he will work closely with the SEN co-ordinator and will keep the BoM informed about the working of this policy. S/he will encourage members of staff to participate in training to help them meet the objectives of this policy. In consultation with the SEN co-ordinator, s/he will liaise with the SENO with regard to support hours and is responsible for personnel appointments.

## **Special Needs Co-ordinator – Edel Lynch**

The Special Needs Co-ordinator will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the day-to-day operation of the SEN Policy
- Co-ordinating provision for children with special educational needs
- Liaising with and advising fellow teachers and contributing to in service training of staff
- Liaising with and advising SNAs with regard to supporting children with special needs
- Liaising with parents of children with special needs
- Monitoring and evaluating SEN provision
- Facilitating planning for class teacher with support teacher
- Collaborating with Assistant SEN coordinator regularly.

## **Assistant SEN Co-ordinator – [Insert Name]**

- Assisting the co-ordinator in all areas of SEN

## **Liaison Teacher for children with ASD integrating into mainstream –[Insert Name]**

Liaison teacher will liaise between staff in ASD unit and mainstream, assist class teachers and support teachers in setting targets and in managing behaviours.

## **Responsibilities of Staff**

All staff are fully aware of the content of this policy and of the procedures described below. Appropriate in-service is made available through the Education Centre and SESS. All teachers involved with SEN are known as Learning Support teachers.

The Learning Support team is deployed according to need and to relevant expertise and commitment. The support teacher works closely with the class teacher providing in-class

support for literacy and numeracy. Pupils may be withdrawn from the mainstream class for a specific purpose (e.g. IT, exemption from Irish, Reading Recovery) or for a specific length of time.

### **Enrolment**

The school aims to meet the needs of any child whom the parent wishes to register at the school as long as a place is available and the admission criteria are fulfilled. The Education For Persons with Disabilities Act 2004 states that 'A child is entitled to attend the school which is most suited to his or her overall needs'.

Parents are required to notify the school of their child's special needs in advance of enrolment through the Home School Liaison Teacher. The BoM will request a copy of the child's medical or psychological report. No child will be refused admission solely on the grounds that s/he has SEN except where the provision required is incompatible with that available in our school.

### **Special Facilities**

[Insert School Name] is a single storey building with ramps where appropriate. There are rooms specially equipped for Autistic classes including an OT room. Where specialised equipment is to be used (i.e. in the case of a child with cerebral palsy) training will be given to staff as required.

### **Resources**

[Insert School Name] is a well-resourced school, which constantly monitors and updates its resources. IT provision is good and is updated regularly.

### **Early Intervention**

We believe it is very important to identify and assess children with special needs as early as possible, so that effective interventions can be put in place. Screening tests are administered in Junior Infants during their second term in school. The MIST (Middle Infants Screening Test) is administered to all pupils in senior infants during the second-term of the school year. Pupils who present with scores below a given point are selected to participate in the 'Forward Together Programme'. The parents of these pupils are invited to attend weekly meetings for an 8-10 week period. These meetings are facilitated by the Learning Support Teachers in senior infants. The focus of these meetings is to effectively promote literacy in the home and to support parents regarding best practice in this area. Each week a particular aspect of literacy is explored through various activities. During the following week, parents put into practice the strategies and activities explored at the meeting. Where it is not possible for parents to attend, the programme is run with the children by the L/S teachers.

At the end of the 8-10 weeks, every participating pupil is re-tested (using MIST) to measure progress made as a result of this early intervention.

### **Stages of Assessment and Provision**

Access to the school's broad and balanced curriculum is achieved for most children by differentiation of class work by the class teacher. When a class teacher, or home school liaison teacher, identifies a child with SEN, the class teacher consults with the SEN co-ordinator/assistant co-ordinator and provides interventions that are ADDITIONAL TO or DIFFERENT FROM those provided as part of the school's usual differentiated curriculum. The first line of responsibility for the progress of all pupils in the class lies with the class teacher. However, as most of our support is in-class, the stages are less defined than in situations where learning support is delivered by withdrawal.

### **Record of Differentiated Support In Class**

Class teachers discuss their concerns with the child's parents.

The triggers for this intervention could be;

- The child makes little or no progress even when teaching approaches are directed at an identified area of weakness
- The child shows signs of difficulty in developing literacy and numeracy skills, which result in poor attainment
- Persistent emotional or behavioural difficulties which do not respond to behaviour management techniques used by the school
- Has sensory or physical difficulties
- Has communication and/or relationship difficulties

The class teacher completes a stage one form and monitors the Record of Differentiated Support for half a term. If this strategy does not work, then the teacher will continue to the next stage, School Action.

**Teachers inform parents that their child's needs would be better served in a small group with a support teacher (see attached). Parents will need to sign their consent.**

### **Stage Two**

In cases where the Record of Differentiated Support indicates that progress has not been made, or if the results of tests (MIST, Drumcondra Primary Reading Test, Sigma T, Belfield Infant Assessment Programme) and teacher observation indicate this to be the case, intervention in the form of a support teacher will be accessed. Again, class teachers will discuss their concerns with the child's parents. The action taken will be as follows:

- The class teacher and support teacher will differentiate the curriculum in specific areas with achievable goals to be implemented by the class teacher and support teacher
- If there are others in the class with similar difficulties in one or more of the specific areas, then a group educational plan will be implemented
- These programmes will be reviewed and updated every term
- While every effort will be made to allow the SEN group/individual to remain included in class, there may be a need to work part of the programme in a SEN room with the support teacher or class teacher. This withdrawal will be time limited and for specific purposes only (e.g. Reading recovery)
- Where progress is such that the child is no longer giving cause for concern, the child will revert to the usual differentiated curriculum available to all children.

### **Stage Three**

The support or class teacher will perform diagnostic tests on these children (at School Action) usually at the beginning and end of the school year. These tests will include the Neale Analysis Reading Test, Aston Index Spelling and Word recognition test, Non-reading Intelligence test etc.

When it has been identified that a child is still struggling and performing below the tenth percentile despite School Action, the class teacher with the support teacher and SEN co-ordinators will seek advice from the SENO, in consultation with the child's parents.

1. A psychological assessment will be arranged (see Education for Persons with Disability Act 2004)

## St. Joseph's National School, Miltown Malbay

2. Other outside agencies may need to be contacted, who will advise on a range of provision including IEP targets and strategies
3. The triggers for intervention for Resource could be that, despite receiving an individualised programme the child;
  - a. Makes little or no progress over a long period of time
  - b. Continues to work at Primary Curriculum levels substantially below that of children of a similar age
  - c. Continues to have literacy and numeracy difficulties
  - d. Has emotional or behavioural difficulties which substantially and regularly interfere with the child's learning, or that of other children, despite an appropriate behaviour management programme and IEP
  - e. Has sensory and/or physical needs, and requires additional specialist equipment or regular visits from an advisory service
  - f. Has an ongoing communication or relationship difficulty that prevents social development, and act as a barrier to learning.
4. When the SEN of the child has been confirmed by the psychologist, an application for resource hours will be forwarded to the SENO. The SENO will determine whether the child falls into the category of lower incidence or high incidence. Lower incidences will be awarded resource hours, while the school makes provision for high incidence cases under the weighted system i.e. General Allocation
5. If it is felt by the psychologist that a child has care needs, a special needs assistant may be applied for
6. In circumstances where a child uses specialised equipment, consultants will be required to demonstrate how the equipment is to be used to at least two SNAs and either the class or support teacher. One of the SEN co-ordinators must also be present
7. The use of specialised yard equipment may also need to be demonstrated to these staff members. Courses will be provided on an ongoing basis to train staff in the relevant areas
8. If the psychologist recommends an exemption from Irish, the Principal will see to this under guidance from the Department of Education & Skills.

### **Individual Education Plan**

Based on Psychologist's report, tests, Record of Differentiation and School Action Plan, the class teacher with the support teacher, SNA (if assigned), parents and representatives of outside agencies (if necessary) formulate an Individual Education Plan.

These IEPs, which employ a small – steps approach, feature significantly in the provision that we make in school. By breaking down the existing levels of attainment into finely graded targets, we ensure that the child experiences success.

This plan includes:

- The nature and degree of the child's abilities and skills
- The degree of the child's special needs
- The present level of performance
- Services to be provided
- Services for transition to 2<sup>nd</sup> level school where appropriate
- The goals, which the child is to achieve over a period of half a year.

The strategies set out in the IEP will, as far as possible, be implemented in the normal classroom setting.

The management of the IEP strategies will be the responsibility of the class teacher, support teacher and the SEN co-ordinator.

### **REVIEW of IEPs**

The SEN co-ordinator will ensure that the review is conducted at the end of three months (October, February, and May). The class teacher consults with the support teacher, the child (and SNA if appointed). They agree on the expected outcomes of the IEP. A draft copy is formulated and sent home to the child's parents. The parents are invited to attend a meeting to discuss or make recommendations to the draft review if they so wish. Again, outside agencies may play a part in formulating the final copy. The review will be recorded on the IEP Review form.

Where progress is unsatisfactory, it may be decided that the child remains in Resource. Where progress is satisfactory, and where the child is consistently achieving targets over the stated time, a decision will be made to revert to School Action. The review in May will be to formulate an IEP, which will be part of the plan for the next teacher in September. It will be carried out as outlined above. IEPs for children moving to 2<sup>nd</sup> level will be referred to at the consultation meetings with the 2<sup>nd</sup> level representative.

### **Involving Parents/Carers and Children.**

Parents/carers are encouraged to be fully involved at all times in their child's education. If they have any concerns they are encouraged to make an appointment to see the class teacher, support teacher, Principal or Deputy Principal.

The views of parents/carers will be sought at all stages of assessment and provision. Whenever and wherever possible the views of the child will be ascertained and the child will be directly involved in the process.

### **Complaints**

If parents have a complaint about the Special Education provision made, then they should in the first instance make an appointment to speak to the SEN co-ordinator and then the Principal.

The complaint will be investigated and dealt with as early as possible. If the matter is not resolved to the parents' satisfaction, then the matter proceeds to the BoM.

### **Monitoring and Reviewing**

The BoM will ensure that SEN provision is an integral part of the school development plan and will evaluate the effectiveness and success of this policy by monitoring:

- The standards obtained by children with special needs
- The number of children at each of the three stages: Differentiation within Class, School Action and Resource
- The level and pattern of help (i.e. average time allocated and the balance of in-class and withdrawal support)
- Views of parents
- Visits from specialist teachers
- Staff views on in-service
- Children's views

**This policy will be reviewed every three years.**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management.

**St. Joseph's National School,  
Miltown Malbay**



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