

Learning Support and Special Educational Needs Policy

Context:

Scoil Bhríde is a Band 1 DEIS school which has 756 pupils enrolled with a staff of 34 Class Teachers, a HSCL co-ordinator, 12 Learning Support Teachers, an Administrative Deputy Principal, an Administrative Principal, 7 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) a part-time secretary, a full-time caretaker and a part-time maintenance person.

Introductory Statement:

This policy was devised by the Principal, Learning Support Co-ordinator, Learning Support Team and Staff of Scoil Bhríde N.S., Portlaoise as part of School Development Planning.

Rationale

- ❑ It was deemed necessary to have a policy on Learning Support and Special Needs in Scoil Bhríde N.S. in order to:
- ❑ Cater for the enrolment of pupils with special education needs in mainstream setting
- ❑ Comply with legislation and department circulars
- ❑ Streamline the provision of special needs support in the school

When drafting the policy for our school we were mindful that:

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 defines a special educational need as " a restriction in capacity to participate in and benefit from education due to an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition and cognate words shall be construed accordingly"

and that:

Learning Support Guidelines 2000, p. 1 refers to pupils whose achievement is at a very low level and who are at risk of not reaching adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School:

Scoil Bhríde seeks to provide an appropriate education for all pupils of the school. Each child in our school can enrich our whole school community. The school community of the Board of Management, Teachers and Parents fully supports the ideal of 'inclusion'. We believe that where practicable, children should be educated in their own community with their siblings and peers. In this school we endeavour to help all of our pupils reach their personal best.

Vision Statement:

- Our school is a happy, caring, safe and creative community where we actively seek to understand, accept and respect each individual.
- We work together to consistently create a positive environment in which all can enjoy a full and rounded learning experience.
- We are committed to providing the life skills and knowledge necessary for all in our community to achieve their full potential

Aims: Learning Support Provision:

The principal aim of learning support is to optimise the teaching and learning process, in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy, before leaving primary school.

In so doing, we also aim to:

- enable these pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level
- develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in these pupils
- enable these pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners
- provide supplementary teaching and additional resources for these pupils in English or Mathematics

Aims: Special Education Needs Provision:

The aims of this Special Education Needs Policy are to:

- enable pupils of all abilities to avail of and benefit from an appropriate education.
- outline our whole school approach to teaching/learning in relation to pupils with special educational needs.
- set out procedures for the enrolment of children with special needs in the school.
- assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child in our school.
- outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs.
- establish communication structures for the involvement of all the partners in the education of pupils with special educational needs.
(L.S. Guidelines)

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Board of Management

The Board of Management has an important role in developing, supporting and monitoring school policy and services in Learning Support and Special Needs. This includes ensuring that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the Learning Support/Resource Teacher and ensuring a secure facility for storage of records in relation to pupils in receipt of Learning Support and Special Needs Services.

Parents

Parents through their unique knowledge of their own child have much to contribute to their child's learning programmes. Collaboration and sharing of relevant information between teachers and parents is of critical importance where children experience learning difficulties. Parents and Learning Support/Resource Teacher meet twice yearly, in October and February to discuss and agree on Individual Education Plans [IEPs]./Pupils Programme of Work(P.P.W.s)

The Principal

The principal teacher has overall responsibility for the operation of the school's Learning Support/Resource programme and the operation of services for children with Special Educational Needs.

Part of this work involves ensuring that the teachers and parents of pupils who are selected for diagnostic assessment and supplementary teaching are enabled to fulfil their roles as outlined in the school plan.

The Principal teacher will:

- monitor the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with very low achievement
- keep teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed in initiating referrals

- inform teachers of any new in-career development programmes or services which may benefit and enhance learning support teaching in the school
- Maintain a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching
- Supporting the implementation of a tracking system at whole school level to monitor the progress of children with learning difficulties.
- Facilitate communication between class teachers and parents of pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching
- Support the professional development of class teachers and learning support/resource teachers by encouraging them to attend courses and/or avail of support services (e.g. P.D.S.T.).

Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her classes, including those selected for supplementary teaching.

The class teacher plays an important role in the initial identification of pupils who may have general or specific learning disabilities. For those children at Stage 1, Circular 02/05, the class teacher will administer screening measures, as outlined in Scoil Bhríde's Assessment policy, which may include screening checklists for pupils in senior infants and 1st class and standardised, norm-referenced tests for older pupils and behavioural checklists where appropriate.

There will be an emphasis on consultation and collaboration with the LS/RT and with parents with regard to Individual Education Plans (IEPs)/Pupils Programme of Work(P.P.W.s)

A planning meeting will take place twice a year between class teachers and the LS/RT in September and February.

Learning Support Teacher/Resource Teacher

The main role of the Learning Support/Resource Teachers will continue to be the provision of supplementary teaching to pupils who have been identified and selected for Learning Support/Resource teaching. The Learning Support and Resource Teachers work to support the class teachers

and parents in providing for children with learning difficulties. Testing, record keeping and consulting and collaborating are parts of the role.

The Learning Support/Resource team may meet once a term as a group to discuss approaches and issues relating to LS/RT. They may also address the whole staff at every staff meeting to ensure a whole school approach.

Special Needs Assistants

The duties of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) are assigned by the Principal Teacher/Class Teacher. These duties will involve tasks of a non-teaching nature, such as:

- General assistance to the class teachers
- Preparation and tidying up of classrooms in which the pupils with special needs are being taught.
- Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom.
- Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, and break times.
- Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks and similar activities.

In order that the child does not become too dependent on her SNA, another member of the SNA team may work with him/her and rotation of S.N.A.s may occur regularly. This rotation may involve rotation of caseload and yard zone.

The Principles of Learning Support/ Resource include:

- Effective whole-school policies and parental involvement
- Prevention of failure
- Provision of intensive early intervention
- Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need

Effective Whole-School Approaches and Parental Involvement include

- A Print-rich school environment
- Use of real books in the classroom
- Consistent language and approaches in Maths throughout all classes.

- Always testing children's spellings in dictation and encouraging the parents to do likewise.
- Use of library facilities is encouraged within school and outside of school
- Games that promote literacy and numeracy are used within the school.
- Use of ICT to support Literacy and numeracy
- Use of P.A.T Programme to second class
- Maths for Fun
- Paired Reading
- Programmes specific to Special Education Needs include Speech & Language Activities, Kinder Music, Circle Time, Paired/Shared Reading, Literacy & Maths for Fun etc.

Prevention of Failure and Provision of Intensive Early Intervention

All children in Junior Infants and Senior Infants are screened in order to identify children experiencing difficulties in learning.

The following screening measures are used:

- Enrolment Form.
- Input from Parents
- Teacher Observation.
- Teacher Designed Tasks and Tests
- Checklists, in line with the school's Assessment Policy
- The Middle Infant Screening Test (M.I.S.T) or Drumcondra Early Literacy Test is administered in 3rd term of Senior Infants in order to identify children in need of Early Intervention.

Direction of Learning Support Resources towards Pupils in Greatest Need:

Pupils at Stage 2

- Priority will be given to children scoring at or below the 10th percentile on a standardised test in English
- Early Intervention English - Senior Infants -2nd class
- Children scoring at or below the 10th percentile on a standardised test in Maths

- Early Intervention Maths - Senior Infants - 2nd.
- Children over 10th percentile in literacy where space allows

Pupils at Stage 3

- Children attending a Resource Teacher may be included for learning support on a case-by-case basis in line with their assessment
- Specific Learning Difficulty, mild speech and language and mild behaviour cases will be included on a case-by-case assessment of need by class teacher and the LS/RT
- EAL children who have a learning difficulty in the mainstream class will be included on a case-by-case basis

Children with Emerging Special Educational Needs:

Stage 1: Procedures for the early identification, screening and addressing of the SEN of certain children:

- The class teacher will identify concerns re the academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development of a child by: teacher observation, parental observations, use of simple teacher designed checklists, infant profiling, or screening measures
- The class teacher will record observations, screening and action taken on the standard school template. A record will be kept for each class.
- Teachers will refer to the Scoil Bhríde Assessment Policy for the appropriate screening measures for their particular class.
- Teacher plans programme of work to meet child's needs and this is agreed with the parent(s).
- A child will be moved on to Stage 2 following consultation with parent(s), principal and LS/RT teachers and class teacher after two instructional terms
- The programme of work documented by the class teacher will be reviewed.

- If concerns seem to warrant the provision of support at Stage 3 level, referral will be made to outside agencies eg. Occupational Therapy.

Stage 2: Referral to Special Education Support Teacher [LS/RT]. A file is opened on each child attending LS/RT.

Supplementary Teaching: Selection & Implementation:

Learning Support:

1. Children moving from Stage 1, following consultation with the class teacher, parents and principal and a review of the programme of work and its implementation in class.

2. Preliminary Screening:

This will take the form of administration and interpretation of tests and other screening measures used by the class teacher, in line with the school's assessment policy.

- Junior Infants: Teacher observation and Belfield will be used
- Senior Infants: Teacher observation and Middle Infants Screening Test [MIST]
- 1st to 6th Classes: Micra T & Sigma T administered annually in early May.

3. Selection for Diagnostic Assessment:

Priority is given to:

- children scoring at or below the 10th percentile on standardised tests
- Children who have not progressed satisfactorily at Stage 1.

Consultation between class teacher and parents.

Consultation between class teacher and LS/RT

LS/RT seeks written consent for further diagnostic testing using a standard consent form. Formal consent at end of Stage 1 remains in

place until withdrawn in writing. When support is withdrawn the school will contact parents. The school respects a parent's right to refuse or be reluctant to allow further testing. Refusals to consent to further testing will be respected, recorded and filed.

4. Diagnostic Assessment:

Diagnostic tests will be administered by the LS/RT and the outcomes of the assessment will be interpreted in consultation with the class teacher.

The diagnostic tests used include (as appropriate):

- Miscue Analysis
- Ted Ames Diagnostic Reading Programme
- Neale Analysis of Reading Ability
- RAIN Sentence Reading Test
- Single Word Spelling Test
- Maths Tracker
- Middle Infant Screening Test (M.I.S.T.)
- Non-Reading Intelligence Test. Levels 1-3
- Dyslexia Screening Test.
- Maths Tracker Levels 1-3, 4-6.
- Basic Number Diagnostic Test.

5. Programme Planning:

Meeting between LS/RT and class teacher at beginning of each instructional term: September and February.

Development of Pupil's Programme of Work (PPW) by the LS/RT in consultation with the class teacher, parent(s) and pupil.

6. Programme Implementation:

Appropriate modification of teaching approaches by the class teacher in the mainstream class.

Provision of supplementary teaching with, as far as possible, children with similar needs at class levels grouped together.

Meeting with parents in September for Term 1 and in February for Term 2. Meetings will be facilitated outside these times, as required, in line with school policy in this regard.

Two instructional terms in the school year: Term 1: September to January inclusive. Term 2: February to June inclusive.

7. Programme Review at end of Instructional Term:

An assessment of the pupil's progress and an evaluation of the PPW will take place at the end of each instructional term at which time there will be consultation between LS/RT, class teacher and parent(s), as appropriate, to decide the level of support now required by the pupil.

8. Continuation or Discontinuation of Supplementary Teaching:

a. Continuation of supplementary teaching in mainstream class and at home

or

b. Continuation of supplementary teaching for a further instructional term which can involve a review of Sigma T and/or Micra T results and consultation with principal, class teacher, parent and pupil.

c. If a significant concern remains after a period of at least one instructional term of Learning Support, the school may consider the need to refer the pupil for assessment by other specialist services including: Educational Psychologist, Speech & Language Therapist, Psychiatrist, Occupational Therapist etc.

Stage 3: Consultation or Referral for assessment to Outside Specialist

Procedure:

- The class teacher meets with parent and/or learning support teacher in consultation with the principal. A parent may also initiate a request for a consultation. There is a need to be sensitive around consultation.
- The staged approach for referring a pupil for assessment is followed.
- The school may from time to time be without the services of a NEPS psychologist.
- If the assessment is for issues around behaviour, a referral to the family GP might be the most appropriate
- The referral can be made by the LS/RT in consultation with the principal or by the principal. A list, for educational psychological assessment is drawn up each year by the LS/RT after consultation with the class teachers and in consultation with the principal, who continues the referral.
- Each year class teachers consult with LS teachers, LS/RT co-ordinator and principal regarding pupils who may be in need of assessment.
- Priority will be given to the child who has never been assessed or those for re-assessment based on need. For those children being re-assessed borderline moderate take precedence.
- Children are then prioritised in consultation with our NEPS psychologist/other relevant professional, consideration being given to degree of need; age; class level [transition to 2nd level].
- All assessments, both school initiated and private assessments are given equal consideration and are referred to SENO for additional resources where indicated.

Documentation & Data Collection:

Co-ordinated by the relevant LS/RT teacher in consultation with class teacher; LS/RT Co-ordinator and principal. HLSC co-ordinator liaises with parents, supporting them in completing documentation.

- Information previously gathered and reviews of classroom & school support plans
- Pupils response to earlier interventions
- Checklists as outlined in school assessment policy
- Information from further school based diagnostic assessment
- Involvement of relevant professionals {Continuum of support: 33]

Assessment Process:

Assessments will usually take place in principal's office, due to space constraints in the school.

Observation in classroom and/or playground, as required.

Meeting with parent arranged by relevant professional liaising with HSCL co-ordinator.

Action Post Assessment:

- Children with assessed low-incidence disabilities will, upon receipt of sanction for additional support from SENO, be provided appropriate supplementary teaching by LS/RT teacher(s).
- Children with assessed high-incidence disabilities will be provided appropriate supplementary teaching by LS/RT teacher(s) under the General Allocation model.

Drafting & Implementing individual/group Educational Programmes:

Children with assessed low-incidence disabilities will have an individual educational plan while children with assessed high-incidence disabilities will typically have a group plan.

The pupils' parents, and in an age-appropriate manner the pupil, should be involved in the development, implementation and review of the Individual Education Plan.

The Individual Education Plan is drawn up LS/RT teacher(s), in consultation with class teacher, parents and pupil (where appropriate), based on the information gathered and parents are invited to review the completed plan. Parents will receive a copy of the plan having reviewed it. If parents fail to attend the review meeting, a copy is posted to their address on our records.

The individual education plan will describe the:

- nature and degree of the pupil's abilities, skills and talents
- nature and degree of the pupil's special educational needs and how those needs affect his/her educational development
- present level of educational performance of the pupil
- special educational needs of the pupil
- special education and related support services to be provided to the pupil to enable the pupil to benefit from education (and related services to be provided to the pupil to enable the pupil to effectively make the transition from pre-school education to primary school education) including:
 - ✓ Strategies for supporting the pupil 's progress and inclusion in the classroom setting (classroom support)
 - ✓ Individual and/or small group/special class interventions/programmes
 - ✓ Specific methodologies/programmes to be implemented
 - ✓ Specific equipment/materials and/or IT supports if required to support learning and access to the curriculum
 - ✓ Support required from a Special Needs Assistant (SNA) if appropriate

- goals which the pupil is to achieve over a period of half a school year, with plan to be implemented over two instructional terms i.e. September - February and February - June.
 - ✓ The pupil's priority learning needs
 - ✓ Long and short term targets to be achieved
- Along with review at the end of each of the two instructional periods, there will be on-going review during the implementation of the plan.

We have an agreed format for educational plans using IEP Writer software along with school designed templates including: LS/RT checklists; Classroom Support Plans; Parent/Teacher Meeting Records; PPW Overview Checklist.

Professionals external to school may be involved in working with the pupil directly or they may act in an advisory capacity supporting the class teacher and learning support / resource teacher in implementing the plan.

The LS/RT teacher will organise the review process. Parents are invited to contribute to this review. Outside professionals and the area SENO will be involved as appropriate or necessary.

The review process will focus on:

- Progress towards targets made by the pupil
- Any new information and/or assessment results
- The effectiveness of the strategies/methodologies used
- The effectiveness of the materials/equipment provided
- The effectiveness of the supports(individual, group, class) provided
- Additional resources may be sought from SENO
- Future action

If the pupil's progress has been satisfactory, an updated educational plan may be drawn up. If the plan is considered to need adjustment, a new or adapted plan should be drawn up.

If the pupil's progress continues to be satisfactory, all concerned may decide that the pupil no longer needs the intensive level of support being provided and would be able to cope with the greater part of classroom tasks with some additional support. In this case it may be decided that the pupil's needs may be met by having a School Support and/or Classroom Support Plan in place.

At the end of the 2nd instructional term [June] LS/RT teachers' plans along with classroom support plans are filed in a dedicated filing cabinet in the school attic. Class teacher pass on copies of these plans to the next class teacher at the last staff meeting also in June. Copies of confidential reports from outside professionals [psychological, OT etc.] are returned to the Principal's office for filing and will be made available to the relevant teachers in the new school year.

Inclusion:

Enrolment Policy:

The School Enrolment Policy states that:

Children with special needs will be resourced in accordance with the level of resources provided by the Department of Education and Science to the Board of Management.

Notwithstanding the availability of such resources, parents of children who are unsatisfied with the level of educational provision in our school, are advised to consider a special school which is designed and resourced to specifically cater for the needs of children with special educational needs

The school invites parents and pupils enrolling in Junior Infants to an information afternoon, usually in the month of May prior to starting school. The school has an Induction Booklet that is distributed at the meeting. The HSLC also invites parent to contact him with any concerns they may have around their child starting school.

Inclusive Practice:

Pupils with special needs are included as fully as possible in the life of the classroom and wider school. This can be seen through various approaches including: a differentiated curriculum; Circle Time; SPHE; Green Team & school garden.

Children who return from one/two years in the Special Language Unit in the Sacred Heart Primary School Portlaoise are assigned back to the class grouping from which they left.

Deployment of Staff

Staff are deployed on a year to year basis given the existing needs of the school. Every effort is made to ensure that fully qualified and experienced teachers are allocated to appropriate duties. The school encourages the up-skilling of staff in the LS/RT area by supporting participation at special education courses, Maths & Reading Recovery Programmes and SESS training as it becomes available throughout the year.

Special Needs Assistants [SNA] are assigned to SEN pupils as sanctioned by the SENO. They support the needs of the pupils in accordance with the agreed duties for SNAs.

Collaboration and Communication

A variety of meetings are arranged to foster collaboration and communication including:

- Annual class group meetings in September
- Annual parent-teacher meetings in Term 1
- Twice yearly invitations to parents to meet with LS/RT regarding educational plans
- Further parent-teacher meetings by appointment
- On-going consultation meetings between class and LS/RT throughout the year
- Meetings with outside agencies as necessary including attendance at planning and case conference meetings with HSE as required

- Meetings with NEPS personnel as required
- Termly meetings for LS/RT team

An audit of LS/RT was conducted in the school year 2010-2011, the results were used to inform planning and delivery for the school year 2011-2012.

Resources

While there would be inventories in the various rooms, an overall inventory will be compiled in the school year 2011-2012. This was highlighted in the audit above.

Transfer to Post Primary

The school is involved in a transition programme for pupils to 2nd level facilitated by the HSCL, SCP co-ordinator and Laois Youth Services. LS/RT teachers liaise with their counterparts in the various 2nd level schools around the transfer of individual pupils.

The school works with the SENO regarding transfer of reports/resources to 2nd level.

Record Keeping

Access to school records is on a need to know basis.

Reports from outside agencies are stored in a secure filing cabinet in the principal's office.

Education plans/classroom support plans are kept by the LS/RT/classroom teacher during the year. They are filed in a dedicated filing cabinet in the attic at year end.

Success Criteria

The success of the LS/RT policy will be seen in how well the children's needs are being met in Scoil Bhride. This will be seen in the provision of

appropriate additional supports, inclusion of pupils with SEN in the life of the school and their progression to 2nd level education.

We will audit the provision of our service from time to time seeking feedback from the various parties involved, in light of the ever changing needs of the school.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Learning support is a collaborative responsibility shared by all the partners. It is important that all partners contribute in the planning and implementation of our school policy on learning support and special educational needs.

Timeframe for Implementation:

This policy will be operational from the beginning of the school year 2011-2012.

The policy will be monitored using various methods including :

- Discussion at Board of Management meetings, In School Management meetings, staff meetings, meetings between Principal and S.E.N. Coordinator.
- Observation of learning support/resource teaching.
- Pupils work samples and work folders.
- Feedback from parents, N.E.P.S., Inspectors etc.
- Reading and reviewing individual education plans.

Responsibility and Timeframe for Review:

This policy will be reviewed every two years or when legislation, circulars or guidelines necessitate a review.

Ratification and Communication:

This policy was ratified at a Board of Management meeting of Scoil Bhríde N.S. on June 30th 2011.

A copy of the policy will be circulated to all teaching staff and S.N.A.s., The Parents' Association. The H.S.C.L. Coordinator will inform his/her parent group of the policy or sections of the policy. The policy will be available to all parents through the office. It will also be available on the school website.