

**SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY**  
Incorporating  
Special Classes for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder  
Special Class for Children with Moderate General Learning Difficulty

2018/19



**ATHY COLLEGE**  
Athy  
County Kildare

**Mission Statement**

*'In a caring school we are dedicated to fostering educational excellence empowering all students to reach their full potential – academic and social, physical and spiritual. Through partnership and cooperation we openly respect and nurture the dignity and uniqueness of each individual'.*

# **SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. Background Information
2. Inclusion
3. Special Education Mission Statement
4. Rationale
5. Admissions Policy
6. Procedure for Enrolment in Special Classes for Students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder
7. Procedure for Enrolment in Special Class for Students with Moderate General Learning Difficulty
8. School Supports for Students with Special Educational Needs
9. Categories of Special Education Needs
10. Responsibilities and Roles within SEN and Special Classes
  - Board of Management
  - The Principal
  - SEN Team
  - Classroom Teacher
  - Special Education Teachers
  - Teachers with Partial Special Education Duties
  - Special Needs Assistants
  - Parents
  - Students
  - Student Support Plans
  - Assessment
  - Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations
11. Identification and Selection for Assessment
12. Model of SEN Provision
13. Special Education Planning
14. Review / Evaluation

## **BACKGROUND**

Athy College extolls the values of empowering all students to reach their full potential. Our special education policy is written in this spirit, where the uniqueness of the individual is recognised and a partnership of learning is created for all.

Athy College upholds the following:

- Equal access to all subjects for all students
- A co-educational and multi-denominational environment
- A strong focus on caring and knowing the individual child (inclusion is paramount)
- Personal Development and fostering Wellbeing

Athy College Special Education Policy is informed by Special Education Circular 0014/2017 which provides full details of the revised Special Education Teaching Allocation to schools and the Department of Education and Skills Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools 2017.

## **INCLUSION**

Athy College welcomes all students in accordance with the Education Act (1998) and in line with the EPSEN Act (2004) which states:

‘ A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with—

(a) the best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under this Act, or

(b) the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated’

Proactive steps are taken to ensure that the school provides an inclusive environment that is non-judgemental and supportive.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION MISSION STATEMENT**

We recognise each pupil as a unique individual with different talents and needs. We endeavour to meet their physical, intellectual and emotional needs through our student focussed programmes. In fostering an atmosphere of learning that is holistic in approach, we nurture each individual student's personal growth and development. We offer an inclusive curriculum with a number of programmes, which are relevant, realistic and co-operative, and we do so in active partnership with pupils, parents and staff.

### **RATIONALE**

This policy document aims to outline the forms that additional educational supports for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) takes in the school and the philosophy which underpins it. It is written in the context of the Education Act 1998, and takes account of the Education for Persons with Disabilities Act (EPSEN) published in 2004. This policy should be viewed as a working document and will be reviewed on an annual basis. This policy bases its rationale on the principles laid out in the EPSEN Act 2004 which states:

‘People with SEN shall have the same right to avail of and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers.....[ensuring that] people with SEN leave school with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives’

### **The Aims of the SEN team at Athy College are:**

- To support as far as possible the integration of the student with special needs into the mainstream setting.
- To promote excellence in learning.
- To enable students to develop positive self-esteem and attitudes to school and learning.

## **MODEL OF SEN PROVISION**

In assessing and deciding which students need to be in receipt of supplementary teaching and which students may benefit from support within the mainstream context the following options are considered:

- ❖ Team Teaching
- ❖ Support Teaching
- ❖ Inclusion of SNA in specific classes
- ❖ Small group withdrawal
- ❖ Individual withdrawal
- ❖ Curricular reduction.

The period of intervention recommended to each student depends on the nature and extent of their individual need. The duration of provision is reviewed at the end of every half term. There are cases where support is needed on a short-term basis, after which the student is in a position to re-engage with the regular curriculum. All decisions in this regard are discussed with parents/guardians, class teachers and student.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION PLANNING**

The objectives of the assessment conducted by the Special Education teacher are to identify the pupil's learning, behavioural, emotional and social needs. The information generated by this assessment process is essential for the completion of the Student Support Plan.

The Student Support Plan may include the following:

- ❖ Personal/Background details

- ❖ Education details (primary school details/assessment and learning support details)
- ❖ Nature & Degree of Special Educational Needs
- ❖ How those needs affect educational development
- ❖ Formal Test
- ❖ General profile based on formal/informal assessment eg
  - ❖ Literacy and numeracy skills
  - ❖ Social and Communication skills
  - ❖ Ability to keep class rules
  
- ❖ Abilities, Skills and Interests
- ❖ Learning Needs
- ❖ Priority Learning Needs
- ❖ Exam supports needed
- ❖ Support services involved
- ❖ Relevant documentation is also attached to the Plan

## **ADMISSIONS POLICY**

Athy College affirms the right of all students to a full education in as inclusive a setting as possible in line with the school's Admissions Policy. Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) follow the school's Admissions Policy.

To ensure that the school can provide for individual needs the following procedures must also be observed:

- All supporting documentation including medical and educational assessments and reports must accompany the enrolment form
- All interested parties (e.g. HSE, NEPS, SENO) must be aware of the applications

## **PROCEDURE FOR ENROLMENT TO THE SPECIAL CLASSES FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER**

- Parents wishing to enrol their son/daughter in the special classes for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder must submit an application for enrolment during the active enrolment period in line with Athy College's Admissions Policy
- A recommendation from an Educational Psychologist that the student requires a placement in an ASD Special Class attached to a mainstream school is essential
- It is imperative that the Educational Psychologist recommends that the particular student will benefit from a placement in an ASD Special class and will benefit from accessing (with supports) the maximum number of mainstream classes
- Collaboration with parents and students with designated Athy College staff members is essential in the enrolment process including the timely submission of all relevant documentation and the timely completion of required documentation for submission to the NCSE

## **PROCEDURE FOR ENROLMENT TO THE SPECIAL CLASS FOR STUDENTS WITH MODERATE GENERAL LEARNING DIFFICULTY**

- Parents wishing to enrol their son/daughter in the special classes for children with Moderate General Learning Difficulty must submit an application for enrolment during the active enrolment period in line with Athy College's Admissions Policy
- A recommendation from an Educational Psychologist that the student requires a placement in a Special Class for students with a Moderate General Learning Difficulty attached to a mainstream school is essential
- It is imperative that the Educational Psychologist recommends that the particular student will benefit from a placement in an Moderate General Learning Difficulty Special class and will access (with supports) mainstream classes
- Collaboration with parents and students with designated Athy College staff members is essential in the enrolment process including the timely submission of all relevant documentation and the timely completion of required documentation for submission to the NCSE



## **SCHOOL SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

The School Supports for students with Special Educational Needs are as follows:

- The Junior Certificate Schools Programme is offered at Junior Cycle and is open to all students and a core JCSP class may be offered to a small group of students following consultation with parents and primary schools and following consideration of recommendations for individual students in their Educational Psychologist Report. Students enter this programme in first year and follow this cross-curricular programme in conjunction with Junior Certificate course.
- Students involved in JCSP received positive discrimination in allocation of resources, in particular in the areas of funding, time and personnel. There is a high emphasis on literacy and numeracy throughout the JCSP course
- The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme is offered at Senior Cycle and is open to all students following consultation with parents, Year Heads and school management.
- Placement in the schools special classes for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder or Moderate General Learning Difficulty is possible if individual students meet eligibility criteria for the special classes and provided that a place is available in the special classes
- Withdrawal of students from Irish and Language for additional support in Literacy, Numeracy and Subject Support
- In-class support and Team-teaching
- Social skills classes for students on the Autistic Spectrum
- Break time supports for students on the Autistic Spectrum
- Evening study and Homework Club
- Guidance Counselling
- School completion including Games at lunchtime

Athy College recognises that no one model of provision is fully effective and different methodologies and approaches are required. The requirement to prioritise those students most in need of support is the determining factor.

## **CATEGORIES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN)**

To date, the school provides for the range of students with Special Educational Needs as outlined by the **Circular No 0070/2014** (See Appendix A and B)

## **RESPONSIBILITIES AND ROLES WITHIN SEN AND SPECIAL CLASSES**

### **Athy College Board of Management**

The Board of Management of the school ensures that the school has a special educational needs policy in place and monitors the implementation and evaluation of the SEN policy.

### **The Principal**

The Department's post-primary guidelines on inclusion outlines the role of the school principal in supporting students with special educational needs. It states that

‘Under current legislation the principal of the school has overall responsibility for ensuring that the special educational needs of students are met. As a consequence, the principal has the general responsibility for establishing and promoting whole-school policies and procedures that are supportive of the learning of all students, including those with special educational needs’

(Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines; DES, 2007, p 67).

The role of the school principal includes the following:

- Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policies and procedures relating to the inclusion of students with special educational needs
- Oversee a whole-school approach to assessment and screening to identify needs and to guide the allocation of appropriate supports
- Ensure effective engagement with feeder primary schools to support the transition of students with special educational needs
- In collaboration with the in-school management team, discharge a key function in the deployment of staff, allocation of resources, organisation of students and timetabling
- Ensure that systems are in place for effective sharing of relevant information on students' needs with all subject teachers

- Facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to the education of students with special educational needs, and ensure that all school staff (subject teachers and special education teachers, guidance counsellors, special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area
- Ensure that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, students and external professionals/agencies.

### **SEN Team**

The SEN/ASD team will consist of SEN and ASD coordinators and special education teachers. Athy College has a core team of teachers to meet the needs of students with special educational needs. All members should have the necessary experience and access to continuing professional development to support the diverse needs of students with special educational needs. The role of the team is to provide support for students who require special education supports or in special class placements by implementing each student's Support Plan. Students with the greatest levels of need have access to the greatest level of support, and whenever possible, these students are supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.

The role of the special education needs team includes developing, implementing and monitoring a whole-school approach to the education of students with special educational needs. This involved developing whole-school procedures for the selection of students for supplementary teaching, assisting in the implementation of whole-school strategies to enhance teaching and learning, and providing guidance to colleagues on the implementation of students' support plans. A member of the special education needs team is assigned the responsibility for coordinating overall provision for special educational needs within the school and assumes responsibility for:

- Co-ordinating data gathering, screening and testing
- Transition planning for students with special educational needs

- Taking a lead role in making arrangements for planning, implementation and review of student support plans
- Supporting the communication of information regarding students' needs to subject teachers, form tutors and year-heads
- Liaising with other agencies, NEPS and allied health professionals
- Liaising with parents and students

The core team works closely with subject teachers, parents and with other support structures within the school, such as the student support team. In addition, the core team can provide invaluable support to subject teachers to meet student needs within their classroom and subject areas.

### **Classroom Teacher**

The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in the classroom, including students with special educational needs. It is particularly important that all class teachers create a classroom environment that accommodates and takes cognisance of learning difficulties. The classroom teacher also plays an important role in the early identification of pupils with SEN. The class teacher is alert to the possibility of general and specific learning difficulties and brings their concerns to the attention of the SEN department. A key element of successful SEN provision is a high level consultation and cooperation between the class teacher and the SEN teaching team. The class teacher is welcome to contribute to the learning targets set out in the SEN Student Support Plan. The class teacher must inform themselves of the special educational needs of the students in each of their classes and be fully informed of the school's policy and procedures in relation to students with SEN.

All subject teachers should implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of students with special educational needs. These include:

Co-operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms

Collaborative problem-solving activities

Heterogeneous group work

Differentiation

Interventions to promote social and emotional competence

Embedding of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching, learning and assessment

Instructional Leadership teaching skills and strategies

Assessment for Learning

### **Special Education Teachers**

All classroom teachers have the primary responsibility for the education of the students in their respective classes. All teachers assigned to special education teaching duties and/or special class teaching duties have responsibility for informing themselves of each student's educational needs, designing a suitable Student Support Plan and implementing same to the best of their professional ability. Furthermore special education teachers are responsible for carrying out assessment for learning and assessment of learning (attainment) and recording students' needs and progress in their classroom.

Special education teachers should be familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning preferences and to meet a variety of needs. Teaching approaches could include a combination of team-teaching initiatives, cooperative teaching, early intervention, small group or individual support. Some students with

more complex and enduring needs may require specific methodologies, teaching approaches and/or learning activities. Such interventions should be based on careful identification of strengths and needs, including multi-disciplinary assessment, when necessary.

Special education teachers, in consultation with subject teachers, should plan their interventions carefully to address students' priority learning needs and to achieve the targets identified in the relevant Student Support Plan. Short-term planning should reflect the support plan targets and should break down the development of skills and content into small incremental steps to address each student's specific needs. Outcomes for students should be routinely assessed, recorded and used to review progress. These outcomes should also be used to inform the targets for the next phase of intervention.

### **Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities**

[http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Overview\\_web.pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Overview_web.pdf) Junior Certificate Schools Programme

[http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum\\_and\\_Assessment/PostPrimary\\_Education/Junior\\_Cycle/Junior\\_Certificate\\_School\\_Programme/Leaving\\_Certificate\\_Applied](http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/PostPrimary_Education/Junior_Cycle/Junior_Certificate_School_Programme/Leaving_Certificate_Applied)

[http://ncca.ie/en/Curriculum\\_and\\_Assessment/Post-Primary\\_Education/Senior\\_Cycle/Overview\\_of-Senior-Cycle/Leaving\\_Certificate\\_Applied/Inclusion\\_of\\_Students\\_with\\_Special\\_Educational\\_Needs:\\_Post-Primary\\_Guidelines\\_\(DES,\\_2007\)](http://ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Post-Primary_Education/Senior_Cycle/Overview_of-Senior-Cycle/Leaving_Certificate_Applied/Inclusion_of_Students_with_Special_Educational_Needs:_Post-Primary_Guidelines_(DES,_2007))

[http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-ReportsGuidelines/insp\\_inclusion\\_students\\_sp\\_ed\\_needs\\_pp\\_guidelines\\_pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-ReportsGuidelines/insp_inclusion_students_sp_ed_needs_pp_guidelines_pdf) Level 2 Learning Programmes: Guidelines for Teachers

[http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum\\_and\\_Assessment/Inclusion/Special\\_Educational\\_Needs/Level\\_2\\_Toolkit/Guidelines\\_nc.pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Inclusion/Special_Educational_Needs/Level_2_Toolkit/Guidelines_nc.pdf) NCCA Assessment: Toolkit at Junior Cycle:

<http://juniorcycle.ie/Assessment>

## **Teachers with Partial Special Education Duties**

The role of the subject teacher, who has special education duties and / or special class duties is to support and contribute to the individual learning needs of SEN students. Teachers with special education classes on their timetable are asked to attend a SEN team meeting once a month. The teacher is asked to contribute to those targets and indeed formulate programmes of their own which provide curricular support to the SEN student. The SEN team will work in close collaboration and consultation with those specialist teachers who contribute so effectively and creatively to the SEN department.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANT**

### **Role of the SNA in support of the student**

Responsibility for the care and well-being of the student in a manner that values, respects and supports the student as well as promotes independence.

<b>Assist</b>	<b>Model</b>	<b>Focus Student</b>
<b>Listen</b>	<b>Clarify</b>	<b>Read material</b>
<b>Encourage</b>	<b>Anticipate</b>	<b>Make note of HW</b>
<b>Support</b>	<b>Observe</b>	

### **Role of the SNA in collaboration with the teacher**

<b>Assist</b>	<b>Prepare materials</b>
<b>Communicate</b>	<b>Feedback observations</b>
<b>Free up in the class</b>	<b>Maintaining all rooms in G6/G7 and work areas</b>
<b>Support</b>	<b>Organise folders</b>

The SNA is privy to confidential information pertaining to SEN pupils. As such confidentiality is of paramount importance. We recognise the enormous contribution our SNAs make to the school. The SNAs report to the Principal. The Principal oversees the rotation and management of the SNA timetables throughout the school year.

### **Parents**

The Special Educational Needs Department works in conjunction with parents of students with SEN and advocates a partnership of collaboration and cooperation with parents of students with special educational needs.

### **Students**

The involvement of pupils in the development, implementation and review of their own learning programmes is an important principle that underpins effective SEN provision. Students are encouraged to contribute to the learning targets as set out in the Student Support Plan and to develop ownership of the skills and strategies that are taught in the special education classes.



## **Student Support Plans**

All students accessing special education either individually or in a group setting have a Student Support Plan in place in line with best practice.

## **Assessment**

Assessment will be carried out by qualified staff. The most appropriate assessment tests will be administered by SEN trained teachers and only further assessment is carried out in the school if the students' needs require it.

## **Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations**

The RACE Co-ordinator will oversee the applications for Reasonable Accommodations in the State Examinations and will liaise with the Special Educational Needs Team and parents as required.

## **Early Intervention and Wellbeing**

**The following publications are examples of best practice in addressing special educational needs**

Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers

[http://www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/Information/NEPS-LiteracyResource/neps\\_literacy\\_good\\_practice\\_guide.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/Information/NEPS-LiteracyResource/neps_literacy_good_practice_guide.pdf) My FRIENDS Youth - Emotional resilience programme

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-PsychologicalService-NEPS-/FRIENDS-Programmes.pdf> <http://www.friendsresilience.org/> Junior Cycle

Well-being Guidelines

[http://www.juniorcycle.ie/NCCA\\_JuniorCycle/media/NCCA/Curriculum/Wellbeing/WellbeingGuidelines-for-Junior-Cycle.pdf](http://www.juniorcycle.ie/NCCA_JuniorCycle/media/NCCA/Curriculum/Wellbeing/WellbeingGuidelines-for-Junior-Cycle.pdf) Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention

[https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/EducationReports/Well\\_Being\\_PP\\_Schools\\_Guidelines\\_Summary.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/EducationReports/Well_Being_PP_Schools_Guidelines_Summary.pdf) NBSS Interventions, Projects and Research

<https://www.nbss.ie/interventions-and-projects>

NBSS Transition and Transfer Programme

<https://www.nbss.ie/interventions-and-projects/behaviour-for-learning/belonging-plus>

Challenging Behaviour; Pathways to Prevention

<http://www.sess.ie/pathways-prevention-resources> Behaviour for Learning Programmes and Resources <https://www.nbss.ie/interventions-and-projects/behaviour-for-learning/why-try>

## **Student Support Team**

The Student Support Team serve an important preventative and early-intervention function, particularly in relation to addressing the needs of students with social, emotional, behavioural and wellbeing needs. The team provides a forum to share concerns and to work towards solutions. The Student Support Team follows best practice in line with the NEPS publication below.

Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-PsychologicalService-NEPS-/Student-Support-Teams-in-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf>

## **IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION FOR ASSESSMENT**

Athy College uses the three-step process outlined in the NEPS Continuum of Support framework to support students with special educational needs and to guide identification, intervention and monitoring of outcomes for students with special educational needs. The Continuum of Support framework recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long-term, and that students require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs. This framework helps to ensure that interventions are incremental, moving from class based interventions to more intensive and individualised support; informed by careful monitoring of progress. Our school aims to use our special education teaching resources in the optimum manner to improve learning experiences and educational outcomes for students with special educational needs. Students with the greatest levels of need are prioritised for the greatest levels of support.

### **Preliminary Screening**

If it is deemed appropriate the Principal initiates a process of formal and informal assessment to be conducted by the SEN department.

### **Informal Assessment**

Observation from mainstream teachers, consultation with parents, student journal, meeting with pupil.

### **Formal Assessment**

Review of entrance tests, review of in house exams and reports, behavioural record if appropriate and consultation with Guidance Counsellor

**Following this assessment stage decisions are made as to appropriate support warranted:**

- ❖ No need for further action
- ❖ Needs for monitoring/support in mainstream setting
- ❖ Purposeful withdrawal

All information/data gathered is recorded in the student's Student Support Plan which is kept in their file.

### **School Based Identification**

Principal and teachers from feeder primary school inform the Principal or members of the SEN team of area of concern.

A class teacher, tutor and/or Year Head can refer any student they are concerned about to the SEN department via email to the student's Year Head and to the Student Support Team which meets weekly. Any referral made by a class teacher or tutor must be forwarded to the Year Head who will begin a broader assessment such as a progress report. This information when complete is passed on to the SEN department.

### **Procedures to be followed**

- Having consulted with the parents and teachers involved, the Principal may seek appropriate assessment through NEPS
- In the situation where the parents refuse to grant consent for their son or daughter to attend for either psychological assessment or support, a record of the offer and its rejection should be kept in the student's file.
- The Education Welfare Act 2000 authorises the Board of Management, with the consent of the parent, to arrange an assessment to gauge the student's intellectual, emotional and physical development.

## **Transfer to Post-Primary School**

Many students will have their special educational needs identified prior to transfer to post-primary school. Since 2014/15 academic year, primary schools forward the NCCA Educational Passport to Athy College in respect of their Sixth Class pupils transferring to our school. This information is very important in the identification of students with special educational needs and the planning of SEN supports in First Year. For students seeking placement in special classes, or incoming First Year students with a high level of need, transition meetings may be arranged between primary and post-primary schools and with parents in advance of transfer.

Athy College uses the CAT 4 (Cognitive Ability Test) as an incoming assessment tool. This assessment provides further screening and diagnostic information to support the planning process for students with special educational needs.

The Continuum of Support provides a framework for schools to enable them to identify and respond to students' needs in a flexible way. This process is also supported through engagement with external professionals, as required. The Continuum of Support suggests the following levels of support:

School Support Plus (for a Few)

School Support (for Some)

Whole-School & Classroom Support (for All).

## **Table 1: Identification of Educational Needs through the Continuum of Support Process**

### **Whole School and Classroom (Support for All)**

The Post-Primary Continuum of Support contains a range of ideas and resources to assist in identification, intervention and monitoring of outcomes. The subject teacher considers how to differentiate the learning programme effectively to accommodate the needs of all students in the class. Identification of those needing additional support can be informed by:

Intake screening

Collection of information from primary schools, including Student Passport

Teacher observation

Teacher assessment

Learning Environment Checklist

Student Support Team involvement

Standardised tests of literacy/numeracy

Student consultation Parental consultation

Where students continue to present with significant difficulties, despite whole school interventions (such as differentiated teaching, a mentoring programme or social skills group), School Support (for Some) is initiated.

### **School Support (For Some)**

At this level a Support Plan is devised and informed by:

Teacher observation records

Teacher-designed measures / assessments

Parent/student interview

Learning environment checklist

Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy

Formal observation of behaviour including ABC charts, frequency measures

Functional assessment as appropriate, including screening measures for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties

The JCSP and LCA programmes are an important aspect and are vital to the School Supports for Some. Support at this level can take many forms, for example: team-teaching, small group or individualised tuition, peer mentoring, inclusion in social skills groups, behaviour reward and consequence systems.

A Support Plan operates for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.

### **School Support Plus (For a Few)**

At this level, subject teacher(s), parents and special education teachers, in collaboration with outside agencies, as required engage in a more detailed and systematic approach to information gathering and assessment. This involves using a broad range of formal and informal assessment and diagnostic tools, including teacher observation, student interview, measures of cognitive ability and social, emotional, behavioural and adaptive functioning, as appropriate. Data generated from this process are used to plan an appropriate intervention and serve as a baseline against which to map progress.

The JCSP and LCA programmes are an important aspect and are vital to the School Supports for A Few, in addition to a Support Plan at this level which is more detailed, individualised, and to involve longer term planning and consultation.



## **Student Support Plan**

A Student Support File has been developed to enable schools to plan interventions and to track a student's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates teachers in documenting progress over time and assists them in providing an appropriate level of support to students, in line with their level of need. Following a period of intervention and review of progress, a decision is made as to the appropriate level of support required by the student. This may result in a decision to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or move to a higher or lower level of support.

Many different types of support plans can be included in the support file. A support plan can take the form of a general plan for support inclusive of JCSP and LCA programmes, a behavioural plan or contract, and a plan which details learning targets and strategies. Students following the JCSP Programme have individual folders detailing their learning plans and attainments for each subject together with self management skills.

As special educational needs can vary from mild and transient to significant and enduring, educational planning should reflect the level of need of the individual student. In this regard, the Student Support File facilitates a graduated response across the different levels of the Continuum. For students with significant, enduring and complex needs, collaboration with external professionals, including multi-disciplinary teams, is advised (for example, occupational therapist, speech and language therapist and psychologist).

## **Wellbeing**

Student wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical well being, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community.

Young people in post-primary school have a wide range of social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs. It is useful in the context of planning a whole-school approach to wellbeing to think of students as needing different levels and kinds of support to experience well being, as outlined in *A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Teachers and Well-being in Post-Primary School: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention*.

In this sense, wellbeing as a whole-school endeavour takes into account the particular needs of students at these three levels.

1. School support for all is a focus which recognises that all students have wellbeing needs and even those who might appear to engage with school and their education with relative ease also need to be supported in achieving the outcomes of Well Being. It has also been the experience of National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) that where school support for all is the focus, all students benefit including those students who may be experiencing particular difficulties.

2. At the second level, there are some students who may be identified as being at risk, or showing signs, of developing difficulties. These students will require additional support and should have timely and appropriate access to school support structures, such as, for example, the pastoral care system, the guidance counsellor or the student support team. School support may also include access to targeted programmes delivered within the school setting.

Finally, there are a few young people who have complex and enduring needs. These students may be receiving or require support from external agencies such as CAMHS. The school may request the involvement of the NEPS psychologist in a collaborative problem-solving process to guide tailored support, intervention and review in the school setting, for these students. This

process should engage collaboratively with the external support services, as appropriate. In every school, there are groups of students who require particular consideration to ensure that planning for Wellbeing is fully inclusive. For example, research shows that children with special needs, especially those with emotional-behavioural or learning difficulties, are significantly more negative about themselves than their peers. Children with SEN see themselves as more anxious, less happy, less confident as learners, more critical of their physical appearance, less popular with their peers and more poorly behaved. These differences are sizable, ranging from one sixth to almost half of a standard deviation. Differences are particularly large in relation to academic self-image. Opportunities for staff to consider how best they can care for the wellbeing of all students in their classes and in the school environment are vital. Increasingly, there are students who are experiencing mental ill-health who may also be accessing support beyond school; it is important that teachers feel confident that they can support these students when they are present in their class.

Opportunities for conversations between students and the pastoral care/student support team can help ensure that the school is supporting student wellbeing both at a whole-school level and through the Wellbeing programme and the curriculum it provides. It can also ensure greater ownership, commitment and shared responsibility for policy implementation. Student support systems, such as buddy systems, peer-mentoring programmes, induction programmes, school chaplaincy, year head and tutor systems, breakfast or lunch clubs, homework clubs and school societies can also contribute greatly to student wellbeing. Guidance counsellors, pastoral care and student support teams, critical incident management teams, behavioural support teams, home/school liaison teachers and SPHE teachers play an important role in building support systems that take account of the needs of all students and their wellbeing.

Students can experience certain aspects of health and wellbeing through focused school-based programmes developed by statutory and voluntary agencies such as the Friends for Life programme, Active School Flag (ASF) initiative, Young Social Innovators (YSI) and other initiatives. These provide important opportunities for students to work together on projects designed to enhance their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. Links and partnerships

with health professionals, educational psychologists, community and sporting organisations and others can provide important complementary expertise and support too. One example of a link that schools have found particularly useful is access to National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and the Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools when schools experience a critical incident.

## **REVIEW / EVALUATION**

It is important that school leaders oversee a whole-school approach to the monitoring and recording of progress. Students' progress in relation to achieving their targets should be regularly and carefully monitored. This stage of the process is informed by effective measurement of baseline performance, including the use of criterion-referenced tests and other methods of assessment (for example, teacher-designed tests, checklists, samples of work, observation and reports from subject teachers, form tutors and year heads) that allow students to demonstrate their progress. This should lead to the establishment of specific targets to be achieved within a defined timeframe, as outlined below.

The progress of each pupil should be monitored on an ongoing basis throughout the academic year.

Attached to each Student Support Plan is a pupil/teacher evaluation sheet. At the end of the academic year, both teacher and pupil evaluate the merits, progress and weaknesses of the programme. Pupil evaluations may help to form the basis of future planning. It is hoped that this review process in the future will include the perspectives of class teachers and parents also.

The primary purpose of this review is to determine whether or not the agreed learning targets have been achieved and to decide the level of resource support, if any that should be provided in the following academic year.

The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) is recommended for students whose learning needs would not be met by the demands of the traditional Leaving Certificate. In instances where an SEN student chooses LCA it is generally accepted that the curriculum itself supports the student and thus specific SEN provision may not be necessary. However where it is apparent that additional support is necessary for an SEN student, this will be reviewed on an individual basis.

## **Relevant Legislation and DES Circular Letters which Inform Athy College SEN Policy**

**Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools DES, 2017**

**New Resource Teaching Allocation Model - Delivery for Primary Students with Special Educational Needs NCSE, 2016**

**Circular 0014/2017 - Special Education Teaching Allocation - Post Primary DES 2017**

**Circular 0030/2014 - The Special Needs Assistant (SNA) scheme to support teachers in meeting the care needs of some children with special educational needs, arising from a disability**

**Circular 0010/2013 - Scheme of grants towards the purchase of essential assistive technology equipment for pupils with physical or communicative disabilities**

**Review of role, organisation and management of Visiting Teachers for Children with Hearing and Visual Impairment (VTHVI) Service, Ireland**

**Supporting Students with ASD Guide, NCSE, 2013**

**The Guidelines for Setting up and Organising Special Classes NCSE, 2016**

**Special Classes in Irish Schools (Research Report) NCSE, 2016**

**Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines (DES, 2007).**

**National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Report Delivery for Students with Special Educational Needs (NCSE, 2014)**

**Special Educational Needs A Continuum of Support, Department of Education and Skills DES and NEPS September 2007**

## **APPENDIX A**

The main purpose of **circular No 0070/2014** is to provide guidance to mainstream post-primary schools on the deployment and organisation of teaching resources for students who need additional teaching support arising from special educational needs and low achievement.

### **Appendix A: High-Incidence Special Educational Needs**

High-incidence resource teaching allocation Resource teaching hours are provided to schools in respect of students with borderline mild general learning disability, mild general learning disability and specific learning disability. These categories of special educational needs are referred to as 'high-incidence' due to the higher incidence or prevalence of children with these special educational needs and the more even distribution of these children within the general population. An allocation of resource teaching support for high incidence special educational needs is made to each post-primary school in respect of these students. These resources should be deployed differentially by the school in order to provide appropriate support for these students.

Appendix A sets out the various categories of high-incidence special educational needs.

#### **Mild/ Borderline Mild General Difficulty**

The Report of the Special Education Review Committee set out that pupils with mild or borderline mild general learning disability have significantly below-average general intellectual functioning, associated with impairment in adaptive behaviour.

In so far as an Intelligence Quotient may be used as an indicator, students with a mild general learning difficulty lie within the I.Q. range 50 to 69 while those with borderline mild general learning difficulty lie within the IQ range 70 to 79.

Children with borderline mild general learning disability may be considered for resource teaching support on account of a special learning problem such as: Mild emotional disturbance

associated with persistent failure in the ordinary class (disruptive behaviour on its own, however, would not constitute grounds for special class placement or additional teaching support); Immature social behaviour; Poor level of language development in relation to overall intellectual level.

### **Specific Learning Disability**

Students with Specific Learning Disability have been assessed by a psychologist as: being of average intelligence or higher; and **having a degree of learning disability specific to basic skills in reading, writing or mathematics which places them at or below the 2nd percentile on suitable, standardised, norm-referenced tests (e.g. Dyslexia, Dyscalculia).**

Identification of students for high-incidence support/learning support. Schools should identify the students for resource teaching and learning support, taking into account the following:

Standardised tests can be used to screen and identify students who are performing at or below the 10th percentile in reading or mathematics. Such students should be prioritised for additional support from the school's annual allocation of resource teaching/learning support teaching hours.

4.2 Students who were previously in receipt of supplementary teaching from a resource or learning support teacher and who continue to experience significant learning difficulties.

Professional assessment reports will be available for some of these students and can assist schools in identifying students for support. 4.3 Students identified as having significant needs through a process of ongoing assessment and intervention as set out in the continuum of support process (DES, 2010). This will be evidenced through school-based assessment of attainment and behavioural, social and emotional functioning and ongoing monitoring of learning outcomes.

Schools seeking advice regarding which tests are appropriate should be referred to the list of approved tests which can be found on the Department website ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)), as well as the Special Education Support Service website ([www.sess.ie](http://www.sess.ie)) and the website of the National Centre for Guidance in Education ([www.ncge.ie](http://www.ncge.ie)). The National Educational Psychological Service can



also assist in this regard. 4.4 Students who previously received learning support or resource teaching under the General Allocation Model in their primary schools and who continue to show marked learning difficulties. Information available from primary schools may include results of standardised test and individual education, behaviour or transition plans. (From 2013/2014, primary schools are required to transfer student information to the relevant post-primary schools using a standard end-of-year 6th class report card developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). This information transfer is contingent on the primary school receiving confirmation from the post-primary school of a student's enrolment for the new school year. From 2014/2015, the 6th class report card will be complemented by a student self-profile that will also include an option for parent/guardian input. Structures to support the transfer of information relating to a student's special educational needs will be introduced in parallel to the introduction by the DES of a new allocation model for schools. More information is available at [www.ncca.ie/transfer](http://www.ncca.ie/transfer).) 4.5 Students with mild or transient educational needs that are associated with speech and language difficulties, social or emotional problems, or mild co-ordination or attention control difficulties associated with identified conditions such as dyspraxia, ADD, and ADHD.

Schools should also carefully consider the needs of other students who may present with a range of learning difficulties that, in themselves, may not meet eligibility criteria for resource teaching or learning support, but whose complex interaction may present a significant barrier to the students' learning and ability to access the curriculum.

The intensity of additional support that is provided for students with low achievement and students with special educational needs should be based on their needs and should be provided differentially through the continuum of support process. Individualised learning targets should be set for each student in accordance with their abilities and needs. The range of teaching supports should include team-teaching, small group teaching and, where necessary, individualised teaching to address specific learning needs. Individualised learning needs can be

addressed in a variety of ways and should not be solely equated with withdrawal from class for one-to-one or group tuition. Configurations of team-teaching have been shown to provide an appropriate model for engaging with individual needs in the collective setting of the classroom.

### **Low-Incidence Special Educational Needs**

Identification of students for low-incidence support: **Students who are identified as having low-incidence special educational needs have all undergone individualised professional assessment which has identified their areas of disability and special educational needs, as set out in Appendix B.** A specific allocation of resource teacher hours is made to their school on their behalf by the SENO. Further in-school assessment and intervention through the continuum of support process assists in identifying their specific educational needs. The information gathered through these processes forms a valuable baseline for planning an appropriate educational programme for each student. Schools may request advice and support for these students through the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Visiting Teacher Service, Special Education Support Service (SESS) and the National Behavioural Support Service (NBSS) where available. Some of these students receive therapeutic and other supports from the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The NCSE continues to process individual resource teaching applications from post-primary schools for low-incidence special educational needs, supported by professional reports. (See Appendix B).

Appendix B sets out the various categories of disability for which low incidence resource teaching hours are provided to schools.

Physical Disability

Such pupils have permanent or protracted disabilities arising from such conditions as congenital deformities, spina bifida, dyspraxia, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, brittle bones, or severe accidental injury.

Because of the impairment of their physical function they require special additional intervention and support if they are to have available to them a level and quality of education appropriate to their needs and abilities. Many require the use of a wheelchair, mobility or seating aid, or other technological support. They may suffer from a lack of muscular control and co-ordination and may have difficulties in communication, particularly in oral articulation, as for example severe dyspraxia. Pupils with a physical disability who have learning difficulties arising from the disability may need resource teaching where there are consequent significant learning difficulties. Others may need assistive technology only.

### Hearing Impairment

Such pupils have a hearing disability that is so serious it impairs significantly their capacity to hear and understand human speech, thus preventing them from participating fully in classroom interaction and from benefiting adequately from school instruction. The great majority of them have been prescribed hearing aids and are availing of the services of a Visiting Teacher. (This category is not intended to include pupils with mild hearing loss.)

Where a pupil with a hearing impairment also meets the criterion for another low-incidence disability category, provision is allocated as for multiple disabilities.

### Visual Impairment

Such pupils have a visual disability which is so serious as to impair significantly their capacity to see, thus interfering with their capacity to perceive visually presented materials, such as pictures,

diagrams, and the written word. Some will have been diagnosed as suffering from conditions, such as congenital blindness, cataracts, albinism and retinitis pigmentosa. Most require the use of low vision aids and are availing of the services of a Visiting Teacher. (This category is not intended to include those pupils whose visual difficulties are satisfactorily corrected by the wearing of spectacles and/or contact lenses.)

Where a pupil with a visual impairment also meets the criterion for another low-incidence disability category, provision is allocated as for multiple disabilities.

### **Emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems**

Such pupils are being treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist for such conditions as neurosis, childhood psychosis, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and conduct disorders that are significantly impairing their socialisation and/or learning in school. (This category is not intended to include pupils whose conduct or behavioural difficulties can be dealt with in accordance with agreed procedures on discipline.) Some pupils in this category may need resource teaching support. Care support from a special needs assistant may be required where a pupil's behaviour is a danger to himself or others or where it seriously interferes with the learning opportunities of other pupils. In certain circumstances, some pupils may require both supports.

### **Moderate General Learning Disability**

Such pupils have been assessed by a psychologist as having a moderate general learning disability (the pupil's full-scale IQ score will have been assessed in the range 35 – 49).

### **Severe or Profound General Learning Disability**

Such pupils have been assessed by a psychologist as having a severe or profound general learning disability. In addition, such pupils may have physical disabilities (the pupil's full-scale IQ score will have been assessed as being below 35).

### **Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

A psychiatrist or psychologist will have assessed and classified such pupils as having autism or autistic spectrum disorder according to DSM–IV or ICD–10 criteria.

In the interest of the pupil with an ASD and in order that the needs of the pupil are adequately addressed, it is important, where feasible, that for a definitive assessment of ASD, a multidisciplinary assessment team should be involved. The need for a multi-disciplinary assessment is also in keeping with the policy of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

### **Specific Speech and Language Disorder**

Such pupils should meet each of the following criteria: The pupil must also have been assessed by a speech and language therapist and found to be at two or more standard deviations (S.D.) below the mean, or at a generally equivalent level (i.e. - 2 S.D. or below, at or below a standard score of 70) in one or more of the main areas of speech and language development. The pupil's non-verbal or performance ability has been assessed by a psychologist and found to be within the average range or above (i.e. non-verbal or performance IQ of 90, or above). The pupil's difficulties are not attributable to hearing impairment; where the pupil is affected to some degree by hearing impairment, the hearing threshold for the speech-related frequencies should be 40Db; Emotional and behavioural disorders or a physical disability are not considered to be primary causes. Pupils with speech and language delays and difficulties are not to be considered under this category. Two assessments, a psychological assessment and a speech and language assessment are necessary in this case.

### **Pupils with Special Educational Needs Arising from an Assessed Syndrome**

The level of additional support to be provided for pupils who present with a particular syndrome e.g. Down syndrome, William's syndrome and Tourette's syndrome will be determined following consideration of psychological or other specialist reports which describes the nature and degree of the pupils special educational needs.

Where a pupil with an assessed syndrome also has a general learning disability, resource teaching support will be allocated to schools in line with hours allocated to pupils assessed as being within the same IQ band (moderate/severe/profound GLD). Where a pupil with an assessed syndrome has any of the other low-incidence disabilities, resource teaching support will be allocated on that basis.

### **Multiple Disabilities**

Pupils assessed with multiple disabilities meet the criteria for two or more of the disabilities described above.

Applications for resources for pupils with special educational needs arising from low-incidence disabilities should be made to the assigned Special Educational Needs Organiser.