

POLICY ON SPECIAL NEEDS AND LEARNING SUPPORT

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 co-operation, we openly respect and nurture the dignity and uniqueness of each individual.

School Ethos and Philosophy

Our school has a strong commitment to all our students, including those students with Special Needs and those in need of Learning Support. While valuing exam success, it is considered to be only one aspect of a student's development in our school. It is, therefore, important that academically weaker students are given every opportunity to experience success within the school environment.

Aims of Special Needs and Learning Support

- All students are valued equally.
- We welcome students with special educational needs and we aim to ensure that all students will have an equal opportunity to engage in the curriculum.
- We try to ensure that the needs of all students are identified and assessed and we aim to provide appropriate strategies for dealing with them.
- We recognize the importance of early identification and assessment.
- We recognize the vital role of parents in the identification and assessment and response to their children's special educational needs and endeavour to work closely in partnership with them.
- We will involve the student in decision-making about their education.
- We will adopt an integrated approach to working with the students.

How students are identified

- The following tests are administered to students on entry to first year:
 - AH2 intelligence test
 - Group Reading Test
 - France level 1 mathematics test

A sample of students' narrative writing is also taken.

- These tests allow us to loosely group students of similar ability level into two or three classes a year, depending on numbers entering the school.
- Some students may be identified and put forward for educational assessments by the NEPS Educational Psychologist. The school is allocated approximately three assessments each year. This process involves close consultation with the students' parents/guardians.
- Classroom teachers may also identify students' needs during the school year.
- Parents/guardians may bring students to the school's attention if they are concerned about their child's progress.
- We liaise with primary schools regarding students who have been identified as needing Special Assistance or Learning Support.

We have a policy of co-operation with outside agencies in attempting to provide the most suitable education for all our students.

Provision of Special Needs and Learning Support

In so far as Department of Education and Science provision of resources allows, we have made every effort to cater for students with SLD (Specific Learning Difficulty) and other learning needs.

There is one trained Special Needs Teacher in the school and one trained Learning Support Teacher. Additional resource hours from the Department are shared with other teachers.

The main focus of Special Needs and Learning Support is in the area of literacy and numeracy.

There is occasional provision of Special Needs Assistants to provide support for students with special needs.

Some students in need of Learning Support and with Special Needs also benefit from the intervention of the School Completion Programme Co-ordinator.

Where appropriate, and following liaison with parents and subject teachers, the Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator encourages parents/guardians to become involved with their children's learning through involvement in literacy and numeracy projects, and, on occasion, projects in other subject areas.

How we meet these needs

1. It is the policy of this school to allow those students with special needs or those in need of learning support to experience as full a school curriculum as possible and enjoy every aspect of school life. Consequently this school offers a fully integrated approach to special needs and learning support.
2. It is the policy of the school to keep class groups small where at all possible. Many of our resources are allocated to the fulfillment of this policy.
3. It is this school's policy that most/all teachers are involved with, and are consequently teachers of special needs students and students in need of learning support.
4. Students may be offered help in small groups or one to one, where resources allow.
5. Students' classroom work is supported across a wide range of curriculum areas.
6. The Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) is central to the provision of education for most of those students with special needs and those in need of learning support in this school. Students enter this programme in first or second year (depending on resources) and follow this cross-curricular programme in conjunction with the Junior Certificate course.
7. Students involved in the JCSP receive positive discrimination in allocation of resources, in particular in the areas of funding, time and personnel.
8. Students with special needs and learning support needs will be encouraged to proceed to senior level, either pursuing the Leaving Certificate Applied, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme or the Established Leaving Certificate course.
9. Advice and support to other staff will be given where possible.
10. Outside agencies will be contacted for support where necessary.