

Coláiste Muire Cobh

Special Educational Needs Policy

Introduction

Coláiste Muire endeavours to respond to the educational needs of all its pupils. Its aims to create and sustain a caring flexible, supportive and safe environment, in which staff and students feel valued, motivated and stimulated in their efforts to fulfil their potential and grow as human beings.

The school believes that all students should be valued equally, irrespective of any individual needs or differences and is committed to making effective provision, through the Department of Education and Science and other agencies for students who have learning support/resource needs. The school is committed to the highest standards to ensure that all students achieve to the best of their abilities in an inclusive environment. Management and staff are committed to supporting and nurturing students and to supporting their families where appropriate. All staff aim to achieve the best possible working practices which are based on trust, respect, and integrity.

Aims and Principles

As set out in the Education Act 1998, The Education for Persons and Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and The Equal Status Acts 2000 2004 our aims are to:

Note: For the purposes of this document Special Education Needs (SEN) refers to the needs of individual students across a spectrum of abilities ranging from low to high and inclusive of those who may have extra difficulty due to learning or physical difficulty.

- Give practical effect to the constitutional rights of students including students who have a disability or who have other special educational needs, as they relate to education.
- Provide, as far as is practicable and having regard to the resources available, a level and quality of education appropriate to the needs and abilities of all students.
- Ensure that people with special educational needs are educated in an inclusive environment, as far as is possible.
- Ensure that those with high ability are nurtured and developed to fulfil their potential.
- Provide for the involvement of parents in decision making regarding the education of their children.
- To ensure that our school cooperates and works closely with the National Council for Special Education, NCSE, the Health Services Executive with regard to the education of Students with special educational needs, and with the Special Education Appeals Board where decisions made about educational care can be appealed.
- To ensure that students with learning support/special educational needs are identified and provided for in a fair and equitable manner so that their learning potential and their sense of self-worth and dignity is developed and respected.
- To ensure that all members of staff are aware of the learning support/special educational needs of students and of the contribution they, the staff members, can make in this area.
- To ensure that students with special educational needs are offered a broad, balanced, relevant, continuous and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.

- To ensure that the achievements of all students are recognised, celebrated and encouraged.
- To set high standards for all students and to provide them with appropriate guidance in order to encourage them to achieve to their full potential and to prepare them for their roles as adult members of society.
- To develop staff expertise in supporting students with learning support/special educational needs.
- To encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents in order to achieve appropriate support at school and at home.
- To co-ordinate the advice, guidance and support of other agencies in supporting students with special educational needs.
- To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources.
- To monitor, evaluate and review the effectiveness of practice in support of students with special educational needs.

Legal Context

This policy is drafted in the context of the specific provisions and definitions with regard to children with disabilities and special educational needs and the statutory requirements placed on Boards of Management by:

- The Educational Act 1998
- The Education Welfare Act 2000
- The education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
- The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004
- The Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill 2003
- Inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs 2007

Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Management

- Will ensure that all students with special educational needs are identified and assessed.
- Will ensure that the school has a comprehensive special educational needs policy in place which has been developed collaboratively with all the relevant partners, to monitor the implementation of that policy and to ensure its evaluation.
- Will ensure that a broad, balanced, relevant, progressive, continuous and differentiated curriculum is provided in the school. To ensure in as far as is practicable that students with special educational needs leave school with the skills necessary to participate to the level of their capability in an inclusive way in society.
- Will ensure that necessary resources are sought on behalf of students with special educational needs.
- Will ensure that a special educational needs co-ordinator is appointed from among the teaching staff.
- Will promote the development of a positive partnership with parents and other relevant agencies/personnel and will ensure that parents are informed of their child's special educational needs and how those needs are being met.

- Will ensure that parents are consulted with regard to, and invited to participate in, the making of significant decisions concerning their child's education.
- Will ensure that the Special Educational needs Policy forms part of subject planning.
- Will develop a whole school approach to literacy and numeracy as required under Section 14 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.

The Principal

(cf. DES. Inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs: Post Primary Guideline 2007 p.67 – 71)

- On behalf of the Board of Management the Principal has responsibility for all aspects of the day-to-day management of policy and provision for students with special educational needs. As outlined in Section 18 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, the Principal may delegate certain functions to appropriate teachers.
- To appoint a special educational needs co-ordinator from among the teaching staff and to work closely with the co-ordinator.
- The Principal, in cooperation with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and Resource teachers shall ensure that an Individual Education Plan is prepared for each Resource student with special educational needs within the school.
- In consultation with the special educational needs co-ordinator and other relevant personnel to liaise with relevant agencies regarding needs and provision. This also includes applications for reasonable accommodation and exemptions in relation to state examinations as well as assessments.
- To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources, including the allocation of hours, funds and equipment. This should include equality of access and opportunity for students with special educational needs in terms of a well equipped room and resources.
- Physical resources allocated to a student shall remain the property of Coláiste Muire at all times.
- To establish a Special Needs Support Team within the school with a specific remit to ensure identification of and support for students with learning support/special educational needs and to make all staff aware of their responsibilities in this area as outlined in section 6.5
- To organise appropriate staff development in the area of Special Educational Needs.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

(Cf DES Inclusion of student with Special Educational Needs 2007 p. 76-77)

The strategic role of the Special Educational needs Co-ordinator is:

- To have an overview, within the whole school, of the management and the provision of special educational needs that is being provided in the school.
- To undertake the purchase of up to-date assessment materials and to co-ordinate such assessment both for incoming and current students in the school
- To co-operate with the Principal and SEN Team in formulating a time-table for the Special Educational Needs Department in relation to the assignment of teachers to specific students or groups of students.
- To co-ordinate systems of communication between all staff and colleagues involved in the provision of resource and learning support

- To facilitate a revolving chairperson and minute taker for the Special Needs Support Team who have been timetabled for meetings regarding SEN.
- To keep records of students with SEN needs, educational/medical reports, assessment results etc.
- To prepare documentation for Irish Exemptions and Reasonable Accommodations for the Junior and Leaving Certificate Examinations.
- To co-ordinate special centres for house exams.
- To engage in personal professional development.
- To liaise with and assist teachers with identification of students with educational needs in conjunction with SEN team and to provide information on assessment and relevant conditions.
- To liaise with, support and co-ordinate the work of special needs assistants.
- To oversee the records of all students with learning support/special educational needs.
- To liaise with parents of students with learning support/special educational needs.
- To ensure the distribution of suitable learning resource and teaching aids, including laptops, subject to those resources and aids being made available by the DES and other agencies. To ensure parents/guardians sign contracts undertaking to care for such equipment.
- To liaise with other external agencies including primary schools, National Educational psychological Service, the HSE and other voluntary bodies.

Subject Teachers

(cf DES Inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs p. 72.73)

- To be aware of the School's policy and procedures in relation to students with special educational needs.
- Develop an attitude of ownership to the education of students in their classes with SEN needs.
- To develop a positive ethos in the classroom for fostering an inclusive approach to meeting the social and educational needs of all students including students with special educational needs.
- To be part of a whole school approach in relation to Special Educational Needs as well as literacy/numeracy.
- To develop policy and practice to work towards the achievement of excellence in all aspects of his/her work
- To identify personal training needs and to secure training where needed
- To seek assistance from the SEN team with regard to students with special education needs and to bring to the co-ordinators attention any student they may be concerned about
- To differentiate the content and methodologies of his/her teaching to facilitate all students and in particular those students with special educational needs.
- To differentiate where necessary the examinations and assessments of students with special educational needs.
- Where a student has an SNA, the subject teacher should plan how to most effectively engage the SNA in consultation with the SNA, Resource Teacher and SEN Co-ordinator

SEN Team

The SEN Team is a group of Resource/Learning Support Teachers who have a sizeable portion of timetabled SEN periods in their timetable. Some of them may be timetabled for a weekly meeting. It may not be possible to timetable all members of the SEN team to attend a weekly meeting.

The school will aspire to organise a SEN team which will have the following objectives:

- To improve morale and avoid isolation through a structure system of support.
- To exchange ideas and information about developments and resources relevant to learning support/special educational needs.
- To share resources, where practicable.
- To identify and meet in service needs.
- To set guidelines for best practice.
- To monitor the school's policy in the area of learning support/special educational needs.

Learning Support and Resource Teachers

(Cf DES inclusion of students with Special Educational needs p. 73-77)

In Coláiste Muire resource and learning support teachers work closely with students who have special educational needs. They work in partnership with subject teachers to ensure that students are supported as effectively as possible.

Learning Support and Resource Teachers are most effective in their support of the SEN student by being his/her advocate, by maintaining confidentiality, and by ensuring that decisions regarding their educational experience in school is student centred.

The work of the SEN Teachers can be in any of the following key areas where applicable:

1. Assessment and identification of students with SEN.
2. Liaison with the student's subject teachers with regard to the pupils learning difficulties, learning style, targets and advice on differentiation. Advising subject teachers in regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, suitable use of textbooks, use of Informational Technology and suitable software and a range of other related matters.
3. Consultation: Recommending and devising appropriate materials for students in terms of concepts, relevance, readability, layout and presentation; consulting with colleagues on appropriate methodology to help obviate learning barriers; consulting with colleagues to devise a range of teaching and learning strategies; contributing to cross-curricular issues concerned with the broader ideas of learning and teaching throughout the school which will influence school policy.
4. Communication on a regular basis with the parents of her/his designated Resource student with regard to the development of an Individual Educational plan, goals and progress.
5. Setting of specific, time-related targets for each student and agreeing these with the student, parents, and subject teachers.
6. Provision of appropriate monitoring, advice as well as direct teaching to students with special educational needs either individually or on a small group basis of not more than 7 students.
7. The Resource teacher will provide direct teaching to a student with SEN either to reinforce the teaching that takes place in the classroom or to improve upon the core skills that may be necessary to successfully access the second level curriculum.

8. Team-teaching were possible and as deemed appropriate.
9. Participation in staff development: By taking part in the formulation of whole school policy; organising and providing in-service, thus raising staff awareness in relation to relevant issues and theories regarding SEN; working directly with subject departments on curricular development to make the curriculum more accessible and relevant to all students.
10. Meeting parents and outside agencies. The teacher may request the presence of the Special Needs Co-ordinator, if necessary.
11. Participation in meetings with other relevant professionals, in the students' interest e.g. psychologists, speech and language therapist, visiting teachers for the visually impaired or for hearing impairment. The teacher may request the presence of the Special Needs Co-ordinator, if necessary.

Parents

(Cf DES Inclusion of students with Special Education Needs p. 80-82)

The school regards the partnership with parents as a very important one and is always open and responsive to expressions of concern made by parents. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend any meeting concerning their son/daughter's progress. Parents are encouraged to discuss any issues of concern with the school at the earliest opportunity.

The school recognises its responsibility under Section 14 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 to.

- Inform parents of their child's special educational needs and how those are being met.
- Consult parents with regard to the making of all decisions of a significant nature concerning their child's education and invite them to participate in such decisions.

It is expected that the parents of all students will endeavour to:

- To work in positive partnership with the school and other agencies.
- To support and encourage their child in his/her education

Special Needs Assistants:

(Cf D.E.S. Inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs. P. 83)

- Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) work closely the direction of the Principal and the SEN Co-ordinator, Resource Teacher and the individual subject teachers in the implementation of school policy as it is related to individual students or groups of students or groups of students. In particular, SNAs play a very important role in the health and safety of the student/s and in his/her/their social and emotional development. They develop a deep understanding of the SEN student and contribute to the overall Individual Education Plan of students under their care.
- The duties of SNAs are assigned by the principal in accordance with the guidelines of the DES.
- Their duties involve tasks of a non-teaching nature such as:
 1. To monitor and assist both in school and on out of school visits, walks and similar activities.
 2. Assisting the teachers in the supervision of students with special needs during assembly, recreation and dispersal periods.
 3. Assist students to develop organisational skills.

4. To liaise and assist the Resource Teacher in the implementation of Care Plans.
5. Accompanying individuals or small group who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom.
6. Assisting students write, take notes and write down homework if necessary.
7. Assist in the supervision of special centres for school and state examinations.
8. Give special assistance (as necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. helping to develop typing skills or writing).
9. Assist with clothing, and general hygiene.
10. Generally assisting the subject teachers under the direction of the Principal, Special Needs Co-ordinator or Resource Teacher with duties of a non-teaching nature. Where a Special Needs Assistant has been appointed to assist a school in catering for a specific student, duties should be modified to support the particular needs of the student concerned.

Individual Education Plans

The Individual Education Plan is a tailored programme compiled by the resource teacher in conjunction with the child, their parents, subject teacher and SNA (where applicable). The IEP allows all involved to work from the same plan so as to maximise the benefit to the student from both an academic and personal angle.

- The Individual Education Plan should include all of the following
 - a) A description of the students special educational need
 - b) Relevant information from the student's primary school
 - c) A record of the student's work/approach to school etc.
 - d) Feedback from the parents/guardians
 - e) Subject teachers observations and recommendations
 - f) The special education provision(staff involved, frequency of support, specific programmes, activities, materials/equipment).
 - g) Other support needs (physically, assistive, counselling medical)
 - h) Monitoring and assessment arrangements
 - i) Review date and arrangements.
- Following the assigned review dates IEP's should be updated and amended where relevant. Copies of the update IEP will be given to the co-ordinator, parents and subject teachers.

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

The school is committed to working in a positive partnership with NEPS whose goals inter alia include:

- To provide direct contact and services to students who need the support of an educational psychologist.
- To provide a consultancy service aimed at developing competencies and effective use of resources in the educational setting.
- To develop a well thought out model of service that balances prevention, assessment and systems work.
- To engage in individual casework with students with special needs.
- To collaborate with others in devising and evaluating appropriate interventions for such students.

- To contribute to whole school planning in relation to the inclusion of children with SEN needs.
- To contribute to relevant professional development programmes for teachers.

Review and Evaluation

- The Learning Support/Resource Team shall review this policy regularly.
- The following criteria shall be considered essential for the successful implementation of the policy:
 - a) The acceptance by the entire school community of the aims, objectives and principles as outlined in the policy.
 - b) The fulfilment of roles and responsibilities as outlined in the policy
 - c) Compliance with identification, inclusion and provision measures as set out in the policy.

Adopted by the Board of Management 31.5.2016
To be reviewed, May 2018.

Signed:

Chairperson, Board of Management