

Special Needs Policy

Introduction:

Cushinstown National School is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Diocese of Ferns. It is a mainstream primary school with an ASD class, catering for a full cross section of children. The purpose of this SEN policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other interested parties on the provision of effective learning support to pupils experiencing low achievement and / or learning difficulties, as well as to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act 1998.

The school currently has the following provisions to cater for children with Special Education Needs:

- Learning Support Teachers
- An ASD class
- Inclusion Support Assistants

Implementation and Review

The implementation of this Policy will commence in the first term of September 2018. It will be reviewed as circumstances may warrant.

This policy was updated in November 2019.

Communication

This policy will be available on our school website or on request.

Rationale:

- To review our existing policy.
- To comply with legislation and new department guidelines.
- To ensure inclusion of children with specific learning difficulties.

Aims of Cushinstown National School in relation to Special Needs:

We hope:

- To enable pupils of all abilities to avail of an appropriate education in as far as we can in a mainstream setting.
- To outline our whole school approach to teaching/learning in relation to pupils with special educational needs.
- To outline our system for identifying and teaching children with special needs.

- To assist parents making a decision on where to enrol their child, through clarifying what services we can provide.
- To outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to supporting the teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs.
- To establish a framework of communication so parents of special educational needs pupils are aware of what instruction their children receive.
- *To ensure compliance with legislation - to promote equality of access to and participation in education and to promote the means whereby students may benefit from education” S. 6 (c) Education Act*

Specific Objectives of Learning Support

Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

- Facilitate pupils to participate and access the full curriculum at an appropriate level.
- Ensure that the Staged Approach/NEPS Continuum of Support is implemented.
- Support children with SEN to integrate with their mainstream class.
- Encourage differentiation in the classroom.
- Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning.
- Enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners at their own level.
- Involve parents in supporting their children’s learning.
- To promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole-school policies on learning support for pupils
- Facilitate pupils in their social and emotional development.

Guiding principles

The school recognises that effective learning programmes are based on the following principles:

- Effective whole-school policies
- Whole school involvement and collaboration between teachers
- Provision of early intervention
- Parental involvement
- Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need
- Implementation of a staged approach to support provision at Class Support/School Support/School Support Plus
- Provision of the model of intervention appropriate for the pupil and the difficulty they are experiencing – e.g. 1:1 intervention, small group intervention, station teaching, team teaching
- Maintenance of Support Plans by Class teachers and Support teachers at Class Support/School Support/School Support Plus
- Thorough Assessment procedures
- Manageable caseloads/timetables
- Support from Outside Agencies
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Intervention Strategies:

The following strategies are being implemented.

- The development and implementation of agreed whole-school approaches to language e.g. phonological awareness, Building Bridges, Genre writing etc.
- The development and implementation of agreed whole-school approaches to the teaching of Maths e.g. Maths language to be used, Ready Set Go Maths.
- Promotion of parental understanding and involvement.
- Implementation of PM Reader Programme with junior classes.
- Class based early intervention by the Learning Support staff resulting in the provision of additional individualised support if needed.
- Ongoing observation and assessment of pupils by the Class Teacher.

Selection of Pupils for Learning Support

- Priority is given to students with specific learning difficulties who need interventions as outlined in relevant reports.
- Priority for Learning Support is given to those pupils who perform at or below the 12th Percentile-In this case the screening process is followed by a consultative meeting between the Class Teacher, the Learning Support Teacher. Parents are contacted and supplementary teaching is offered.
- The principle of Early Intervention applies, therefore pupils from Junior Infants to Second Class are given priority in the allocation of Learning Support.
- In Junior Infants pupils are screened using teacher observation and standardised test used as necessary. Senior Infants are screened using the MIST test and Phonological awareness checklist. From First class upwards, all pupils are screened annually, using appropriate standardised tests.
- *A staged approach to meeting the needs of pupils with S.E.N. is applied as outlined below.*

STAGED APPROACH

Stage 1: Classroom Support

The class teacher or a parent is concerned about a pupil's progress. The concern may relate to the child's academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development.

Action taken – The class teacher notes the area of concern and monitors the child's progress in this area. A ***classroom support plan*** and review record will be completed. Classwork will be differentiated as appropriate. All of this is in consultation with parents.

Stage 2: School Support

The class teacher/or the principal remains concerned about the pupil.

Action taken – The child is referred to the learning support teacher for diagnostic assessment. If diagnostic testing and or the teachers concerns deem it appropriate supplementary teaching is arranged for the pupil. Permission should be sought from parents for both diagnostic assessment and attendance in learning support. *A school support plan* will be completed at this stage by the learning support teacher and class teacher in consultation with parents.

Stage 3: School Support Plus

The class teacher and learning support teacher and the principal think additional support is needed for a pupil. This support involves a specialist outside the school.

Action taken – The school commissions an Individual Psychological Assessment for a pupil. The school in cooperation with the parents endeavours to use the assessment to address the needs of the pupil. As each psychological assessment is an individual assessment the actions taken by the school will vary greatly. This may involve attendance in learning support and programmes to be followed by the parents with the child. There may be additional follow up by other relevant supports such as Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist etc.

A School Support Plus plan will be drafted and implemented based on the recommendations given.

The school is conscious that in any given year a limited number of psychological assessments can be commissioned. The school will, therefore, have to prioritise for assessment. Priority will be given to cases where the school feels that an assessment will most affect the success of a child in accessing the curriculum. Appeals in relation to prioritising pupils for assessment can be made to the Board of Management by parents.

Provision of Supplementary Teaching

- The primary work of the Learning Support Teachers is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils identified above.
- A system of small group or individual withdrawal and/or in-class support will operate in response to the needs of the individual pupil.
- A School Support or School Support plus will be devised in consultation with the Class Teacher, Learning Support Teacher and parents.
- The Learning Support Teachers will maintain the following documentation.
 - School Support and School Support Plus plans, as well as review records for these
 - Short term planning and Cuntas Míosiúl
 - Assessment folder-Samples of work and individualised tests.

Creation and Coordinating Educational Plans

The Individual Profile and Learning Plan (IPLP), Individual Educational Plans (IEP) and Behavioural Plans will be devised by the support teachers in collaboration with the class

teacher. The Education Plans will be in accordance with the Special Education Teaching allocation model, outlined by the DES in Circular 0013/2017.

- School Support plans for students under 12%ile and students with dyslexia
- School Support Plus plans for children with specific learning difficulties or behavioural difficulties
- School Support Plus plan for students enrolled in the ASD class

All plans should identify priority learning needs and main barriers to learning and focus on two to four educational/ behavioural targets. Behavioural targets will be prioritised as needed, as these may inhibit learning.

The School Support and School Support Plus plan will address the pupils' full range of needs and will include:

- Relevant details from the Class Teacher – from their Support checklist and Classroom Support Plans
- Assessment Results
- Other relevant information, e.g. reports from other agencies
- Learning strengths and attainments
- Priority Learning Needs
- Learning Targets
- Class based Learning Activities
- Supplementary support activities
- Home Support Activities.

Support plans including behavioural targets may also include information under the following headings:

- Negative behaviour
- Why behaviour occurs
- Targets
- Strategies for promoting positive behaviour

Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching

- Following the end of an Instructional Term, a decision is made to continue/discontinue the provision of Supplementary Teaching.
- The decision making process involves consultation between the Class Teacher, the Learning Support Teacher, and the pupil's parents, and account is also taken of the overall Learning Support demands in the school.
- The criteria on which the decision will be made include:
 - A consideration as to whether the pupil has achieved some/all of the learning targets set
 - A consideration as to whether the pupil will be able to cope independently/semi independently in the classroom learning context.

Referral to out of School Agencies

- The Principal/Learning Support Teacher co-ordinates the referral of pupils to an Educational Psychologist.

- The Principal and/or Learning Support Teacher and/or Class Teacher meet with the parents to discuss the need for a referral to outside agencies.
- The Class Teacher completes the necessary referral form in consultation with the appropriate school personnel.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Learning Support is a collaborative responsibility shared by all partners in the learning experiences. It is important that all partners contribute in the planning and implementation of our school plan on learning support.

Board of Management

The role of the Board of Management is to:

- Oversee the development, implementation and review of the provision of Learning Support in the school.
- Ensure adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the Learning Support Teachers.
- Provide a secure facility for storage of records in relation to pupils in receipt of Learning Support.
- Budget for ongoing support for Professional Development in Learning Support for staff.

Principal

The role of the principal is to:

- Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policy on Learning Support in co-operation with the Board of Management, teachers, parents and children.
- Work with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan on learning support in the context of Special Needs Education.
- Monitor the implementation of the school plan on Learning Support on an ongoing basis.
- Monitor the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with lowest levels of achievement.
- Assume direct responsibility for co-ordinating Learning Support in the context of Special Needs Services.
- Oversee the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need.
- Keep teachers informed about external assessment services that are available and the procedure to be followed in initiation referrals.
- Help teachers increase their knowledge and skills in the area of Learning Support.

Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching. In supporting the development and implementation of the school plan on Learning Support, the class teacher should:

- Implement teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all pupils and to the greatest extent possible prevent the emergence of learning difficulties.

- Implement the school policies on screening and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in English and Maths by co-operating and assisting with the administration and scoring of appropriate screening measures.
- The class teacher will liaise closely with parents and elicit relevant information from them regarding e.g. vision/hearing checks. This will inform their Support checklist before they draw up a Classroom Support plan or collaborate with Learning Support teachers to create a School Support or School Support Plus Plan.
- The Staged Approach requires class teachers to create, implement and review a Classroom Plan for students that they have identified, to monitor their educational, social or behavioural needs. The class teacher will open a Support Plan for the pupil at stage 1, before referring the child to School Support or School Support Plus if necessary.
- For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, to collaborate with the Learning Support Teacher in the development of a School Support or School Support Plus plan by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve these targets.
- For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, to adjust the classroom programmes in line with the agreed learning targets and activities.

With regard to teaching pupils with low achievement, the following general approaches and methods are recommended:

- Such children should be prioritised when accessing information from previous class teachers.
- Priority when establishing parental contact.
- Priority given during group teaching.
- Modify presentation and questioning techniques to maximise the involvement of pupils with low achievement in class activities.
- Placing emphasis on oral language development across the curriculum.
- Providing pupils with extra tutoring in the key basic skills in literacy and numeracy.
- Setting learning targets at an appropriate level.
- Providing learning activities and material which are suitably challenging but which also ensure success and progress.
- Carrying out error analyses of a pupil's work to pinpoint specific areas of difficulty
- Setting up 'buddy systems' in class (high achievers collaboratively working with low achievers, e.g. peer tutoring / paired reading).
- Applying assessments and tests which offer challenge and opportunities for success to children of all levels of achievement.

A key role of successful Learning Support is a very high level of consultation and co-operation between the Class Teacher and the Learning Support Teacher. Central to this consultation is the development, implementation and review of Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus plans.

Support Teacher

Support teacher duties should include both teaching and non-teaching duties. The role of the Support Teacher is to:

- Develop a School Support or School Support Plus plan as outlined above for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with the Class Teacher and parents.

- Researching the pupil's learning difficulty/SEN, to become more knowledgeable about this barrier to learning
- Being familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and to meet a wide variety of needs Implement learning programmes recommended by outside specialists e.g. Speech and Language Therapists or Occupational Therapists-specific instruction or training may be needed before implementation.
- Maintain planning and progress record or equivalent for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of Learning Support.
- Provide teaching in English and Maths to pupils in the school who experience low achievement, in accordance with the school's selection criteria.
- Contribute to the development of policy on Learning Support at whole school level.
- Provide advice to the Class Teachers in such areas as individual pupil assessment and programme planning, as well as approaches to language development, reading, writing and mathematics for pupils experiencing difficulties.
- Contribute at school level to decision making regarding the purchase of resources to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms and in the Learning Support rooms.
- Liaise with external agencies such as psychologist to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs.
- Maintain a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and special education support.

Parents

The involvement of parents in the Learning Support Programme for their children is vital to its success. Specifically, parents contribute through:

- Regular communication with the Class Teacher and Learning Support Teacher.
- Creating a home environment where literacy can thrive.
- Fostering positive attitudes about school and learning.
- Participating in shared reading programme-PM Readers.
- Encouraging the child to visit the library.
- Developing the child's oral language.
- Developing the child's social mathematics-telling time, going to the shop.

Inclusion

The vision of our school is one of inclusiveness among other values. Class teachers and Learning Support Teachers work in harmony to ensure that attending learning support does not exclude S.E.N. pupils from other activities as far as possible- see Inclusion policy for further details.

Assessment

Individual assessment folder for all students on Stage 2 (School Support) and Stage 3 (School Support Plus) of the continuum of support to include test results, assessments and work samples throughout the year-this will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the Learning Support room.

Standardised tests

- **First Term:** Micra T with first class
- **February:** Middle Infant Screening Test with Senior infants-MIST Follow On Program to be done with Senior Infants after February midterm
- **May:** MicraT and SigmaT from 1st to 6th. (2nd, 4th and 6th results to be reported to Department of Education)

PM Readers-Assessments

- Senior Infants all start on Level one in September. Assessment in January.
- First class assessment in September.
- Second class assessment the week before Halloween.

Individual students to be levelled as needed throughout the year.

York Assessment for Reading Comprehension (YARC): Used when needed.

Record Keeping

Record keeping for pupils with S.E.N. will be in line with our separate policy on record keeping (GDPR). All SEN student files to be kept in locked filing cabinet in Learning Support room.

Tree Folders are to be kept in a locked press in classrooms.

Additional Resources

If the I.P.L.P. identifies resources that we cannot provide in the mainstream setting this will be brought to the attention of the S.E.N.O. by the Principal.

Collaboration and Communication

- Our staged approach to identifying and addressing the needs of S.E.N. pupils allows for good communication between the school and parents as permission is

sought for children to receive diagnostic assessments to receive Learning Support and to receive a psychological assessment.

- At parent teacher meetings the learning support team will be available to meet parents of S.E.N. pupils.
- The Learning Support team will also be available to meet parents of S.E.N. pupils during the year should a parent request a meeting. The Learning Support teachers may also request a meeting with a parent if they feel it is necessary.
- Parents will be notified in September if their child requires learning support and which staff member will be taking them.
- I.E.P meetings will be in the first and second term.

Deployment of Staff

The deployment of staff to S.E.N. will be reviewed annually in the context of our needs and the resources available from the D.E.S.

Resources

Resources are managed by the Learning Support teachers. New resources will be acquired annually where they can be afforded. Resources that are needed and for which there are particular grants will be applied for by the Principal. Equality of access to resources and facilities within the school is always given consideration.

Transfer to Post Primary

Our school will identify pupils with S.E.N. to the Post Primary sector. With the permission of the parents of the pupils with S.E.N., we will hand over relevant reports.

Success Criteria

The implementation of this policy should enhance the pupils learning in the following ways.

1. Improved standards of academic achievement with the pupils individual learning programme
2. Enabling the discontinuation of the provision of Learning Support based on positive assessment results.
3. Enhanced parental involvement in supporting their child's learning needs.
4. Increased opportunities for effective communication between school personnel in relation to pupil progress.

Implementation/Ratification and Review:

Ratified by the Board of Management on _____

Signed: _____

Mr. John Michael Porter (Chairperson, Board of Management)

Ms Carol O'Reilly (Principal Teacher)