



Scoil Mhuire agus Íde
Newcastlewest, Co. Limerick

Special Educational Needs Policy

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY

Purpose:

This document sets out the policy of the school in respect of students who have special educational needs as defined in Section 52 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (E.P.S.E.C. Act).

“Special education needs means, in relation to a person, a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition”.

Link to Mission Statement:

Scoil Mhuire agus Íde respects the dignity of each student, staff member and parent. We strive to be a welcoming, inclusive school and to appreciate the value of diversity. To be truly inclusive a school must reflect the community it serves in all its diversity. This policy reflects our schools mission statement – to help all our students to take their place in society as educated, mature and committed Christians. The holistic formation and development of our students, including those who are specially challenged, takes place in the caring community of our school. In Scoil Mhuire agus Íde we value the diversity of our students and endeavour to build an integrated and inclusive school.

Description of School:

Scoil Mhuire agus Íde is a co-educational voluntary secondary school and was formed in 1992 with the amalgamation of Scoil Mhuire, a convent secondary school run by the Sisters of Mercy and St. Ita’s Secondary School for boys. The school has a Board of Trustees and a Board of Management and it follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the Department of Education and Science (D.E.S) which may be amended from time to time in accordance with sections 9 and 30 of the Education Act 1998. It operates within the regulations laid down by the D.E.S. The school depends on the grants and resources provided by the D.E.S. and school policy in all areas must have regard to the resources and funding made available by the D.E.S.

As outlined on our Admissions Policy applications form students with special needs are welcomed provided the school can meet these needs adequately, subject to the limitations imposed by D.E.S. funding and resources. This will be dealt with later under the strategy for implementation of this policy.

Rationale:

This policy aims to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to enable the school to:-

- Make an accurate and appropriate assessment of the needs of students who may have special educational needs.
- Access the school’s capacity to cater for the needs identified.
- To specify what additional resources may be required by the student and/or the school.

Legal Framework:

In drawing up our special needs policy we have due regard to D.E.S. policy and to our statutory obligation as outlined in the appendix to ensure equality of access to,

participation in and benefit from all aspects of school care by students with special educational needs, to the greatest degree practicable.

Strategy for Implementation of Policy:

Within the constraints of available resources all students who are admitted to the school shall have access to, participate in and benefit from an education suitable to their needs. The school shall seek adequate resources, equipment and accommodation from the D.E.S. and other relevant agencies. The school will make every effort to maximise the resources available to students with special educational needs.

Identification of Students with Special Education Needs (S.E.N.):

- Following a request to enrol a child in the school parents/guardians will complete an enrolment form, giving an indication of any special needs their child may have.
- At an open night for incoming first year students the parent body will be made aware of the support programme in Scoil Mhuire agus Íde and will be invited to meet with the Assistant Principal for Special Needs and/or Learning Support teacher.
- Parents/guardians will be asked to make available to the Principal and/or Assistant Principal for Special Needs any assessments or reports etc relevant to the students needs.
- Meetings of parents/guardians with Principal and/or Assistant Principal for Special Needs will be facilitated.
- Feeder primary schools will be contacted to ascertain their knowledge of the pupil's needs and any support already in place. Records of attendance will also be sought.
- A similar procedure will follow with regard to students entering the school at a later stage.
- When relevant information is assembled and a fuller profile is established, the Assistant Principal for Special Needs and the Principal will collaborate on how best to address the situation. Advice may be sought from other outside agencies at this point.
- Application will be made to the Special Education Needs Organiser (S.E.N.O.) for whatever supports are seen as in the best interest of the student.
- In September/October all First Year students will be given a number of norm - referenced tests in literacy, numeracy and a general test of ability.

Selection of Students for Learning Support and/or Resource Teaching:

- The school will provide learning support for students with identified learning needs. Parents/guardians will be contacted offering additional support and a meeting arranged to discuss this issue.
- The discussion to accept support or not rests with the parents/guardians and a response will be sought in writing.
- In consultation with parents/guardians, subject teachers, student and Assistant Principal for Special Needs, the best method of delivery of support to the student will be established, whether on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. This decision will be influenced by the resources and personnel available.
- Requests for exemption from certain subjects will be processed by Assistant Principal for Special Needs and adjudicated on by the Principal; students will be advised to and facilitated in taking extra classes in literacy or numeracy at this time; where feasible.

- Where the S.E.N.O. allows resource hours to students the school will put in place a range of support mechanisms to address these needs within the resources of the school.
- Provision will be made in the timetable for banding in some subjects to allow students to access the subject at the level most suited to their abilities.
- Certain categories of students may need additional support e.g. international students and/or traveller children. The school will assess the needs of these students and will use the resources provided to meet those needs.
- The Principal and members of the Learning Support team and/or of Pastoral Care Team will liaise with other professionals e.g. psychologists, visiting teachers, speech and language therapists who are working with our students. The school will accommodate such consultations.
- If deemed necessary the Principal and Assistant Principal for Special Needs may in consultation with parents/guardians request a further assessment for a student.
- Special accommodations in the state examinations will be sought according to the needs and best interests of the student S.E.N.O.

Monitoring:

- Progress of students will be monitored on an ongoing basis via school reports and assessments. Intervention may be provided as needy students emerge.
- Assistant Principal for Special Needs and learning support teacher will liaise with subject teachers, year heads and parents/guardians to establish suitability of programme.
- At Junior Level diagnostic and standardised tests may be given at intervals.

Role of Board of Management:

- To ensure that a policy is in place and that it is reviewed regularly.
- To make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.
- To ensure that the school meets its requirements in relation to inclusion under the Education Act (1998) and the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (2004).
- To ensure that adequate resources are sought and provided.
- To provide for appropriate staff development.

Role of Principal/Deputy Principal:

- Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policy on learning support and special needs.
- To monitor the implementation of this policy and ensure review of policy.
- To apply for necessary resources to the D.E.S..
- To organise in-service for staff so as to develop awareness among class teachers of the characteristics and effects of general and specific learning disabilities, the support services that are available for pupils with diagnosed disabilities and the arrangements that need to be made within classrooms to meet the learning needs of these pupils.
- To allocate time for staff to reflect, review and plan curricular arrangements, for planning of Individual Education Programmes (IEPS), for consulting with support personnel and other professionals regarding the needs, progress and review of individual students. The Principal shall provide adequate time for review of policy by special needs team as required.
- To ensure adequate timetabling of hours for learning support, resource, traveller and non-national support.
- To sanction exemption from certain subjects as requested.

Role of Assistant Principal for Special Needs:

- To participate in the formulation of Special Needs Policy.
- To coordinate the schools response to students with special needs and advise the Principal of issues that arise in relation to this.
- To inform parents/guardians of the provision for students with special needs in the school.
- To contact feeder primary schools and collect any relevant information about the special needs of incoming students. To seek copies of any relevant reports, exemptions etc.
- To carry out assessment of First Year (or other new students) to establish the learning profile of students. Inform Principal of results.
- To contact parents re participation of students in supplementary teaching and to obtain a response in writing. To advise parents/guardians of outside support agencies.
- To maintain a list of pupils who are receiving learning support/resource teaching.
- To communicate to Principal and staff at the start of each year, relevant information regarding new students and to provide an update during each subsequent school year as required. To relay any relevant information as it becomes available.
- To liaise with Principal in applying for appropriate resources from S.E.N.O.
- Monitor progress of students with special needs and respond accordingly.
- Advise parents/guardians on progress of students.
- In consultation with parents/guardians, and Principal and guidance counsellor to facilitate referral of students for further assessment.
- Liaise with Pastoral Care Team, Learning Support Team, Year Heads, subject teachers as necessary.
- Liaise with external agencies – visiting teachers, psychologist, speech and language therapists, special needs organiser, etc.
- Liaise with parents, teachers, school authorities and the psychological services to ensure that the needs of S.E.N. students are met as far as practicable.
- In consultation with other relevant personnel to ensure the preparation of a suitable learning programme for students with S.E.N. To ensure review of this programme.
- To process the granting of exemptions from certain subjects.
- To apply for appropriate reasonable accommodations for S.E.N. students in the state examinations and to make suitable arrangements for these students in house exams.

Role of Learning Support/Resource Teacher:

- Participate in the formulation and implementation of Special Needs Policy.
- Assist in the assessment of students.
- Provide learning support to students as allocated on timetable.
- In consultation with other relevant personnel assist in the preparation of learning programme for student/students. Setting agreed targets.
- Maintain records of students including test results, etc.
- Evaluate the progress of individual students.
- Liaise with parents/guardians as need arises.
- Liaise with subject teachers in the implementation of this programme.
- Liaise with assistant principal for special needs on an ongoing basis.
- Advise the Principal on issues that arise in the day-to-day implementation of the learning support programme.

Role of Subject Teachers (teaching staff):

- Implement the special needs policy by taking into account the needs and learning styles of all their students and employ suitable teaching methods so that all students can access the curriculum at an appropriate level.
- Will take steps to inform themselves of the special needs of any student in their class and will bring any concerns re such a student to the relevant personnel.
- Will participate, when requested, in the formulation of learning programmes for students with S.E.N. and cooperate in the implementation and review of such programmes.
- Maintain records of the student's progress.
- Will cooperate with the schools assessment procedure.
- Will in as far as it is practicable use positive reinforcement in the classroom so as to foster a sense of self-esteem in S.E.N. students which may be self-fulfilling.

Role of Guidance Counsellor:

- 1) To participate in the preparation of the Special Needs Policy of the school.
- 2) To work with the Special Needs Team and other staff in the implementation in the review of this policy.
- 3) To liaise on an ongoing basis with the other members of the Special Needs Team and Pastoral Care Team as relevant matters arise.
- 4) To provide a range of services to all students, and including careers information, study skills and examination techniques, consultation with parents/guardians, referral services, etc., with an awareness of the special needs of some students.
- 5) Together with Special Needs Team to conduct assessments of incoming first years and other students new to the school. To advise the Principal of any matters arising from such assessments.
- 6) To support students who have been referred.
- 7) To facilitate referral of student to outside agencies e.g. educational psychologist as need arises.
- 8) To advise on supports available at Third Level for S.E.N. students and to assist students in accessing these supports.

Role of Special Needs Assistants:

- Carry out their duties as assigned by the Principal in accordance with Circular 10/76 – “Duties and responsibilities of Principal Teacher” and sanctioned by the Board of Management. These duties to be of a non-teaching nature.
- To cater for the care needs of special needs students in line with school policy.
- To contribute to the preparation of learning programme for S.E.N. student, to assist in as far as possible in the implementation of such programme.
- To advise management, parents/guardians and teaching staff of any issues that may arise in caring for special needs students.

Role of Parents/Guardians:

- To inform the school in advance of enrolment of any S.E.N. their child may have and to make available to the school any reports, assessments etc which may be necessary to allow the school to assess the needs of the student and the potential of the school to meet these needs.
- To meet with the Principal and/or Assistant Principal for Special Needs to discuss the students needs and how these are to be catered for.

- To contribute to the preparation of a learning programme for the students in the review of this programme.
- To liaise on an ongoing basis with the school as may be necessary.
- To support the work of the school with the student and to ensure the correct use and maintenance of any aids or equipment that are provided for the student.

Role of Student:

- To contribute to the drawing up of learning programme and the setting of learning targets for themselves.
- To contribute to the selection of texts and other materials that may help to reach these targets.
- To contribute to the review of learning programme.
- To cooperate with the agreed programme and its evaluation by participating in appropriate tests and assessments.

Monitoring Procedures:

- The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor, Assistant Principal for Special Needs and Learning Support Teacher(s) – these will dedicate one meeting per term to this purpose.
- The needs of students who have been identified at any time as requiring special support will be reviewed from time to time as appropriate and at the end/beginning of each academic year.
- Throughout the school teachers are asked to discuss with the relevant Year Head and/or Assistant Principal for Special Needs any concerns they may have about the special educational needs of any of their students. In addition, teachers at the junior cycle will be surveyed once a year to help identify students whose progress is of serious concern. The school will then seek to examine these findings and address the concerns arising.

Record Keeping:

Records relating to students with special needs will be retained by the Principal, Guidance Counsellor, Assistant Principal for Special Needs and Learning Support teacher.

Circulation of Policy:

Parents will be made aware of the school's S.E.N. policy through the school's prospectus and at the school's open night. A copy of the S.E.N. policy will be available if parents/guardians wish to see it. Each staff member will be provided with a copy of the S.E.N. policy. The student council will be briefed on the S.E.N. policy.

Review and Evaluation:

The S.E.N. policy will be reviewed according to the schedule of review of school policies. Evaluation of the policy will be ongoing.

Active from: September 2007

Ratified by Board of Management: 10th. March 2008

APPENDICES

Article 42: Article 42 of the Constitution refers to the right of *all* children to receive a minimum education and makes it a duty of the State to ensure that this education is provided for. The Education Act, 1998 emphasises the responsibility of the individual Boards of Management of schools in making provision for students who attend.

Education Act 1998

Section 9: “A recognised school shall provide education to students which is appropriate to their abilities and needs and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing; it shall, as far as resources permit-

- (a) ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with special educational needs, are identified and provided for,” later on
- (j) subject to this Act and in particular section 15(2) (d), establish and maintain an admissions policy which provides for maximum accessibility to the school.

Section 15: Section 15(2) (d) states that Boards of Management shall “publish the policy of the school concerning admission to and participation in the school and ensure that as regards that policy principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents’ choice are respected”
Section(2) (f) states that Boards of Management shall “within the resources provided to the school in accordance with Section 12, make reasonable provision and accommodation for students with special educational needs.”

**Equal Status Act
2000:**

The Equal Status Act states that failure to provide reasonable accommodation may amount to discrimination. It also provides for positive actions (discrimination) to cater for special needs of persons who may require facilities, arrangements, services or assistance not required by those who do not have special needs as long as these carried out in a bona fide attempt to promote equality of educational opportunity.

Section 11:

Section 11 of the Equal Status Act prohibits the harassment of students, in this case on the grounds of their disability. A person in authority must not harass a student who has applied for admission or avails of any service provided by the school. Moreover responsible persons must not permit another person to suffer harassment at school. They must ensure that they take reasonably practicable steps to prevent harassment of individuals at the school.

Equal Status Act:

The Equal Status Act, 2000, makes it illegal to discriminate against a person on a number of specified grounds, including disability. The above stipulations apply not only to admission of any student to the school but also to his/her access to any course, facility or benefit provided therein nor can a school discriminate in relation to expulsion of a student or any other sanction in relation to expulsion of a student or any other sanction against him/her.

Education for persons With Special Educational Needs Act 2004

Sections 2 & 14: 2. – 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.

14. – (1) The Board of Management of a school shall –

(a) ensure that section 2 is complied with as respects that school

(b) ensure that parents of a student with special educational needs are –

(i) informed of their child's needs and how those needs are being met, and

(ii) consulted with regard to, and invited to participate in, the making of all decisions of a significant nature concerning their child's education.

(c) co-operate to the greatest extent practicable with the Council and its employees and, in particular, provide to the Council such information as the council may from time to time reasonably request for the performance by it of its functions.

(d) ensure that all relevant teachers and other relevant employees of the school are aware of the special educational needs of students.

(e) ensure that teachers and other relevant employees of the school are aware of the importance of identifying children and students who have special educational needs, and

(f) inculcate in students of the school an awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities

(2) *Subsection (1)* is in addition to, and not in substitution for, any other enactment imposing duties on boards of management of schools.

E.P.S.E.N. Act 2004: To provide that people with special educational needs shall have the same right to avail of and benefit from appropriate education as do their peers who do not have such needs.

The E.P.S.E.N. Act also clearly lays down procedures for –

- the preparation and content of educational plans
- arrangements for referral by the school of a student for assessment
- involvement of parents and S.E.N.O.
- assessment of child by N.C.S.E. for Health Board
- appeals procedure

- provision of resources by relevant ministers.

E.P.S.E.N. Act 2004

Section 13:

The Minister (for Education and Science) and the Minister for Health and Children shall each, with the consent of the Minister for Finance, out of monies provided by the Oireachtas, provide to or in respect of schools and their employees such moneys and other resources as are determined by him or her for the purposes of the implementation of educational plans prepared in respect of children with special educational needs.

SERC Report 1993: Recommended “as much integration as is feasible with as little segregation as is necessary.”