



St. Columba's College

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# Special Educational Needs Policy

Updated December 8th 2021, next due for review and ratification in 2022

Person Responsible for updating policy: Head of SEN Department

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## Introduction

St. Columba's College aims to provide a high-quality education for all of its boarding and day pupils. The purpose of this SEN policy is to provide information for teachers, parents and other interested parents about the provision of effective learning support to pupils with additional learning needs as well as to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act 1998.

## Principles

This policy is based on the following principles:

- Every member of the college community has a valuable contribution to make.
- Individual pupils will have additional learning needs over and above the usual range of needs in a mainstream classroom.
- To provide a continuum of support requires a whole school approach.
- Parental involvement is important.
- Extra resources need to be directed towards those with learning difficulties.

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- The Curriculum of Support framework will Intensive intervention may be needed for specific pupils.

## Aims

The Learning Support Programme aims to

- Accurately identify those with additional learning needs
- Optimize the teaching and learning process for each pupil with additional learning needs
- Help pupils to understand the nature of their abilities and difficulties
- Promote positive self-esteem
- Enable access to the curriculum at every level.
- Enable pupils to become independent learners and monitor their own progress
- Identify those who may be eligible for reasonable accommodations in Leaving and Junior Certificate exams, and make applications for them
- Enable students to make best use of reasonable accommodations where granted
- Identify and obtain appropriate assistive technology
- Identify and obtain appropriate Special Needs Assistance
- Provide supplementary teaching and resources in English and other subjects where necessary
- Enable the students to develop good study skills and an understanding of the learning process
- Promote collaboration among teaching staff
- Liaise with Matron and House staff to try to address learning issues that arise from medical conditions.

## Identification of Need


A combination of some or all of the following data will be used to identify those with additional academic, physical, social and emotional difficulties which are a barrier to learning.

## Referral

Pupils with diagnosed learning difficulties should be referred to the SEN department by their parents/guardians; the school expects that all assessments and areas of need will be disclosed by the parents or guardians at the time of application. St Columba's is an inclusive school and does not discriminate against pupils on the grounds of ability so there is no disadvantage to disclosing additional learning difficulties.

## Standardised Assessments

Each new pupil sits three standardized literacy assessments of sight reading, reading comprehension and spelling. These take place in September or as soon as possible after arrival if



a pupil joins the school mid-year. If a pupil has a significant literacy deficit in one or more assessment then we contact their parents or guardians to offer the possibility of extra classes. There is a focus on literacy because it is central to accessing the curriculum in all other subjects.

Standardised assessments recognised by the State Exams Commission along with reading and writing samples are used to determine need and eligibility for Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations.

## Curricular Assessment

If a pupil is experiencing low achievement in routine assignments, classroom tests and/or subject exams they may be referred by their subject teacher.

## Classroom Observation

Special Education teachers or Special Needs Assistants may observe pupils of concern in their classes.

## Consultation

With the pupils, parents, relevant external professionals and teachers to gain background information, strengths and weaknesses and priorities.

## Meeting Needs

### Individual Education Plans & Group Education Plans


Based on the screening assessments, reports received, further informal and formal diagnostic assessments and in collaboration with the students and parents an individual education plan is drawn up. This process will take several weeks.

They will have targets and will be reviewed regularly.

The needs of individual students will be communicated to subject teachers through a shared google document, staff meetings, occasional emails.

The following areas may be addressed depending on the student:

**LITERACY & LANGUAGE SKILLS** - a multi-sensory programme is drawn up focussed on the gaps in the student's literacy skills. Classes may be only once or twice a week and so repeated practice by the pupil in between classes is essential.



**NUMERACY SKILLS** - an individual programme is drawn up based on the student's needs, the focus will be on JC or LC success

**STUDY & ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS** - A range of resources and practical help where possible is used to provide structure so that learning can take place.

**EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIOURAL SKILLS** - A range of resources is used to develop emotional awareness and self-control.

**ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY** - Practice in using technology to access the curriculum

**REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS in SCHOOL EXAMS** - The Special Education teachers liaise with the Exams Coordinator to provide accommodations in school exams as far as possible. This may be provided once the eligibility is determined or as a way to test the efficacy of a particular accommodation before applying for it. This is a labour-intensive resource and not all exams can be covered for every student so priority is given to exam years and then from Fifth Form down.

**THIRD LEVEL** - advice and support with filling in the CAO application and the DARE process, specifically the Personal Statement.

## **TIMETABLING**

### **SUPPORT FOR ALL**

Classroom based support for all will be provided by the subject teacher through appropriate differentiation of content and activities.


The Special Education teachers will aim to support this differentiation by providing information on the specific needs of students and providing resources where possible.

Special Needs Assistants may be part of classroom based support.

The Special Education teachers will liaise with students in the classroom and subject teachers and use end of term reports to monitor progress.

### **SUPPORT FOR SOME**

### **SUPPORT CLASSES**



There are classes set against Irish for those who are exempt, usually two per week for Maths and two per week for literacy support. These will run all year long but the pupils may be moved in or out of the class depending on progress.

### **SMALL GROUP TEACHING**

Students may be withdrawn from the main timetable in small groups to work on skills or for curriculum support. Non-examination subjects or study periods are prioritised for withdrawal. Attendance at these classes will depend on progress.

### **SUPPORT PLUS FOR A FEW**

### **INDIVIDUAL TUITION**

This will be appropriate and necessary for certain pupils or for certain skills programmes. It is usually organised on a withdrawal basis, non-examination or study periods are prioritised for withdrawal. Attendance at these classes will depend on progress.

## **Monitoring & Review Outcomes**

Standardized literacy assessments are repeated once per term for relevant pupils to monitor progress. They may indicate a need for an adjustment in the level of support. Their results are collated and circulated in google docs for the information of the class teachers concerned. Other skills, such as typing can be measured using the assessment built into the typing programme.


Pupils' end of term reports are kept on record and used to monitor progress.

Other targets are reviewed as set out in the IEP, usually termly. Progress is recorded in the IEP and Student Support File.

## **ADJUSTMENT OF LEVELS AND NATURE OF SUPPORT**

The Continuum of Support allows for flexibility and, subject to review of targets and achievement, the level of support may change. For example:

- A student may improve their literacy levels to average levels and so no longer require support.
- Assistive Technology may be able to compensate for the difficulties and enable the student to learn independently without the need for Special Education classes.

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- A student may continue to have a specific difficulty (with spelling, for example) but otherwise be able to handle the demands of the curriculum and so continuing with Learning Support classes is unnecessary.

## Communication

### Communication with parents


- St Columba's College in general has excellent communication with the parent body and with particular parents who need to discuss issues. There are three Parent-Teacher meetings per year and comprehensive written reports each term. The phone number and email for the Special Education department is available and/or appointments can be made through the school office.
- Special Education Teachers are available to meet with parents of prospective students to discuss areas of strength and need.
- If our initial assessments indicate a significant deficit in an area of literacy we contact parents or guardians by email to offer support and gather input for the IEP
- Parents/guardians receive a written report at the end of every term.
- When applying for RACE, DARE or NCSE resources the Special Education teacher will liaise with the parents.

### Communication with teaching staff

- Following the literacy assessments of all new pupils in September, the results are circulated around staff by way of a Google Doc and email.
- A list of those with difficulties and a brief note is also circulated. The results of ongoing literacy assessments are also recorded and available to staff.
- Special Education teachers share information about their students and their progress at Convention (staff meetings). Subject teachers can email or approach the SET to discuss issues or vice versa at any time, a meeting may need to be arranged.
- Subject teachers bring up pupils of concern with the Special Education Teachers due to lack of progress or behavioural indicators that may have been missed by the assessments and enrolment process.

### Communication with outside agencies

- State Examinations Commission - to complete the applications for Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Exams with results from and follow up with any queries related to those applications.
- National Educational Psychology Service - to seek advice on specific issues with students or applications.

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- National Council for Special Education - to apply for appropriate supports such as Special Needs Assistants and Assistive Technology.
  - Visiting Teacher Service - (for the visually impaired, for the hearing impaired) to coordinate visits with the student and teaching staff, applications for equipment.
  - CAO and Disability Route to Education - to support the student in filling in the CAO form, and completing the Personal Statement. Completing the Educational Impact Statement and coordinating the inputs of teaching staff.
  - Educational Psychologists - to follow up on assessments and to prepare for any assessments by completing background information forms etc.
  - Occupational Therapists - to follow up on assessments and to prepare for any assessments by completing background information forms etc.
  - Speech and Language Therapists - to follow up on assessments and to prepare for any assessments by completing background information forms etc.

## Signatures & Declarations

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 8th December 2021.

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Chair of the Board of Management

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Secretary of the Board of Management