

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY

Special Educational Needs

The term Special Educational Needs is defined in the Educational Act 1998 as “The educational needs of students who have a disability and the educational needs of exceptionally able students”. Students with SEN include the following groups

- Students who at the time of enrolment have already been identified as having a disability which requires extra educational support
- Students whose SEN are identified while in school
- Students who for various reasons e.g. through illness, bereavement or family problems, may require temporary special educational support
- “Marginal Students” – students who due to learning and/or behaviour problems do not seem to fit into the school community and although not immediately thought of within the special educational framework might benefit from a good policy

This policy applies to students who are exceptional; gifted students, students with learning difficulties, students with disabilities and students who are at risk – personal, emotional, social or educational, in short students who may need additional help or support to enable them to derive the maximum benefit from school.

In St. Mogue’s College we are dedicated to helping each student to achieve his/her individual potential with the provision of a quality system of Special Educational Needs being central to this commitment. This educational endeavour and initiative in the Special Needs domain concurs completely with the projected objectives of the school’s Mission Statement.

Aims

Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

- Facilitate students to participate in a curriculum best suited to their ability.
- Develop positive self esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning
- Enable students to monitor their own learning and become independent learners within their own ability.
- Involve parents in supporting their children’s learning
- Promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole school policies on Special Educational Needs for these students.
- Comply with the terms of Section 9 of the Education Act and other relevant legislation (Education Welfare Act, Equal Status Act, Education for persons with a Disability Bill)

Goals

St. Mogue's College shall strive to have in place appropriate channels of communication and procedures.

- To identify the Special Educational Needs of all incoming 1st years.
- To review the Special Educational Needs of current students.
- To seek to provide for the needs identified.
- To record the projected and actual progress of Special Educational Needs pupils.

Within the constraints of available resources, all students with Special Educational Needs, who are admitted to the school shall have access to, participate in and benefit from an education suitable to their needs. The school shall endeavour to seek adequate resources, equipment and accommodation from the Department of Education and Science and other relevant agencies. The school will make every effort to maximise the resources available to students with Special Educational Needs. These include Visiting Teachers, Resource Teachers, Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, Counsellors, technical aid and equipment etc. The school will endeavour to provide access and accommodation for such personnel in the school building.

Assessment of Need

The school will assess the special needs of students upon entry to the school and will reassess the needs of students from time to time. The school will also make an assessment of its capacity to respond adequately to those needs. Where a student's condition or circumstances change in the course of their school career such a student may merit re-assessment and re-evaluation of suitable provision.

Entry to St. Mogue's College – New Students

Application for entry to St. Mogue's College is made on a standard application form. This form is designed to elicit relevant information about the special needs of students and parents are required to make known their child's needs on the form. Where students have been assessed by a psychologist parents supply the details to the school and are asked to make a copy of any such assessment report available to the Principal. Where a student has availed of any special tuition and/or resources at National School or Secondary School, the parents are required to make this known on the application form.

Following consultation and the school is satisfied that appropriate measures can be taken to attempt to cater for the needs of the student, the student will be accepted into the school subject to the following:

- The necessary resources are made available by the Department of Education and Science and any other relevant agencies.
- Parents/Guardians co-operate with the school to ensure that the student's needs are met as fully as possible and that they supply further information from time to time as may be required.
- The student's behaviour complies with the behavioural standards of the school's Code of Discipline and does not interfere with the progress of taught lessons or the rights of other students to their education.

Where a student is refused admission, parents will be advised of their rights of appeal as prescribed by the 1998 Education Act. Once admitted, appropriate measures will be taken by the school with a view to endeavouring to provide for the student's needs.

Current Students

The school will review the needs of students from time to time, including those who were deemed at entry to have Special Educational Needs and those who were not through Informal Diagnosis (observation and Error Analysis) and Formal Diagnosis (using screening and diagnostic standardised testing materials). This takes place prior to enrolment of incoming 1st years, in early September (1st years) and as necessary thereafter. Testing is generally administered by the SEN Co-ordinator, Guidance Counsellor and other members of SEN Team as required. Partners in Education (partners within the school, family members, Community outside the school and specialist support services) are all included in review meetings/consultations.

If a student is thought to have a learning difficulty, a sequence of events is followed in order to meet the students needs. The student avails of Learning Support for a period of time. If after that time no progress/improvement is made the procedure for referrals is invoked. (See Referrals Procedure)

Special Needs Provision in St. Mogue's College

The Special Educational Needs Department at St. Mogue's College comprises of Resource Teachers and Learning Support Teachers. The aim of the Department is to ensure access for all Special Educational Needs students to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which offers development and progression in learning and experience. There is acceptance and respect for individuals regardless of ability, impairment, race or gender.

The function and roles of teachers in the Special Educational Needs Department include teaching, assessing and profiling students with Special Educational Needs, formulating and implementing education programmes, liaison, and support to teachers and monitoring of students progress. A weekly meeting is scheduled to record, review and update relevant reports and issues.

Once students have been identified with learning difficulties they are profiled, Individual Education Programmes formulated and implemented and students are withdrawn from mainstream classes.

Time spent in the Special Educational Needs Department, withdrawal from mainstream classes will enable students to:

- Benefit from one to one and/or small group instruction in their specific area of difficulty.
- Become more confident in the abilities they do have
- Develop good study skills
- Spend time revising knowledge and practising skills encountered during specific subject classes.
- Develop confidence in the use of ICT.
- Take a greater responsibility for their own learning.

In 1st year a class is provided for students of very low ability and/or other recognised needs, with this class linking up with other classes for communal learning activities for the Junior Certificate Schools Programme. The school will seek appropriate resources from the Department of Education and Science and other relevant agencies to meet the needs identified. Timetabled access to supplementary teaching is generally during Junior Cycle years. Access for individual students may be arranged at senior cycle where it is considered necessary.

Certain categories of student may be entitled to additional support e.g. non-national students, traveller children etc The school will take steps to assess the needs of those students and will use the resources provided to meet those needs.

Students of exceptional ability are catered for in their regular banded groups. However, at Junior Cycle in Irish, English and Maths, classes are run concurrently from second year onwards at least, to enable separate Higher Level and Ordinary Level classes to be formed.

Students with serious learning difficulties are recommended to take a reduced Junior Cycle curriculum and complete the Junior Certificate Schools Programme. At Senior Cycle students may opt for regular Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied or the Rapid Programme. Supplementary teaching is offered where applicable.

Selection of Pupils for Supplementary Teaching.

1. Priority is given to those with Psychological Reports who meet requirements which entitle them to Resource Teaching hours. (Department of Education and Science approved).
2. Students who show significant discrepancy between actual and expected performance.
3. Students performing below average (at or below 10th percentile) in standardised tests in literacy and or ability.
4. Students who are experiencing very low achievement.
5. Students who have fallen behind in mainstream curriculum subjects.

Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.S)

Where students are selected for supplementary teaching the Special Educational Needs Team meet to profile students and to devise Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and/or Group Education Plans (GEPs) in consultation with the Principal and Parents. The students involved also contribute to setting their own short term targets.

Such plans address the students full range of needs and include:

- Details from student's subject teachers.
- 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 and home support activities.

Each plan is monitored through teacher observation, the keeping of planning and progress records and through students own checklists.

A detailed review takes place at the end of each instructional term (September – January/February – May). Parents/Guardians will be informed of their pupil's progress if requested.

Parental Approval & Responsibility

- Parental Approval is sought to proceed with diagnostic assessment which may lead to supplementary teaching. When a child is selected for Learning Support/Resource the Parents/Guardians must accept or decline the place in writing.
- Where parents wish to seek special consideration for their child for the State Examinations, the parent should meet with the Learning Support Teacher at the 1st Year Parent-Teacher Meeting or as soon as a psychological report becomes available for students in Junior Cycle and at the 4th Year Parent-Teacher Meeting for Senior Cycle Students
- Parents/Guardians have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with the programme followed by their child and where there is any concern, parents should contact the Principal or Deputy Principal, the Learning Support teacher and/or the Guidance Counsellor as appropriate.

Timetabling

- The provision of Learning Support and/or Resource Hours is in addition to regular subject teaching.
- Provision of supplementary teaching operates in response to the needs of the individual student.
- Priority is given to those students whose achievement is lower in standardised tests and/or those who are not coping with mainstream curriculum.
- Effort is made to ensure that students do not miss out on the same curricular area each time they attend Learning Support or Resource.

Referrals Procedure

- The Principal and/or Special Needs Co-ordinator and/or relevant personnel meet with the parents to discuss the need for referral and to seek consent.
- If a student has been receiving supplementary support and little/no progress is seen to be made, that student may need to be referred to an out of school agency for further assessment.
- Criteria on which this decision is based include:
 - Has the student achieved some/any of learning targets set?
 - Will the student be able to cope independently in the mainstream classroom?
- The Special Needs Co-ordinator oversees the Referral of students to outside agencies e.g. NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service).
- The necessary referral form is completed in consultation with the appropriate school personnel.
- The external professional visits the school to meet with the student, Parents/Guardians, Principal, Learning Support Teacher/Resource Teacher (as appropriate) and the assessment is conducted...

- This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed. Specific actions depending on the outcome of the Educational Assessment are then put into place. These might include the formulation and implementation of an IEP, supplementary resource teaching hours, counselling, speech and Language Therapy, other therapies, social skills training etc.
- Where concern arises regarding the manner or speed of the follow-through post assessment, such concern is pursued by the Principal with the out of school agency concerned.

Success Criteria

Students with Special Educational Needs are identified, assessed and receive appropriate provision. They are profiled and an Individual Education Programme is drawn up and implemented, in consultation with Parents, Student and all relevant parties. Suitable programmes are in place for individual students and for groups of students at both Junior and Senior Cycle.

Targets are set for each individual availing of special needs provision. Their progress is measurable and measured regularly. Parents, school management and other relevant agencies are informed of progress as appropriate. Pupils receive appropriate professional support and that support is available on site where possible.

A decision is made at the end of each instructional term (September – January), (February – End of May) to continue/discontinue the provision of supplementary teaching.

The criteria upon which this is based include:

- Has students achieved all/some of the learning targets.
- Will the students be able to cope independently/semi independently in the classroom learning context?

The decision making process involves consultation between the Special Educational Needs Team, the Students, Parents, other relevant agencies (e.g. NEPS) with consideration also allocated to the overall Special Educational Needs demands in the school.

A decision to continue the provision of supplementary teaching will result in a revision of the student's Individual Education Programme.

Review Procedure

This policy will be reviewed regularly, with prescribed amendments being presented to teaching staff for consultation and to the school Board of Management for subsequent ratification. Other review measures may be initiated when issues of content or implementation of this policy are reported to the Special Educational Needs Team, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator or School Management. School management must ensure appropriate mechanisms and procedures are devised to assist the progress of this review process as quickly as possible.

APPENDICES

Role of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

- Administer and correct standardised reading, spelling and ability tests in September/October to ascertain reading ages of incoming first years.
- Identify pupils with difficulties in reading or writing skills through formal/informal diagnosis.
- Prepare a register of all Special Educational Needs pupils.
- Keep records, profiles, individual education plans, psychological reports and update records regularly.
- Liaise with parents, subject teachers, school management.
- Liaise externally with Special Educational Needs Officers, National Educational Psychological Service, the Department of Education and Science and other relevant outside agencies.
- Apply for special arrangements and reasonable concessions in Certificate examinations
- Test pupils, using screening and diagnostic standardised testing materials.
- Schedule a weekly meeting to record, review and update relevant reports and issues.
- Keep informed of current education research, thinking and methodology in the area of Special Educational Needs.

- Keep informed of all current legislation, 1998 Education Act, Equality Act, Persons with Disabilities Act, Education Welfare Act and to ensure implementation of such Acts in relation to Special Educational Needs.
- Prepare resources.
- Endeavour to ensure all concerned have a proper understanding of the role of the Special Educational Needs Department.
- Strive to keep the Special Educational Needs Department continuously updated with latest equipment, resources and facilities to the highest possible standards.

Role of Resource Teacher/Learning Support Teacher

- Provide one to one and/or small group instruction to students from mainstream classes.
- Be available to support pupils and staff both within and outside the classroom environment.
- Operate partnership or “team teaching”.
- Prepare resources.
- Formulate and implement programmes to develop and enhance learning, self confidence, self esteem, social skills and life skills.
- Prepare students for examinations using the concessions granted to them.
- Test pupils using screening and diagnostic standardised testing materials.
- Liaise with concerned others.
- Use the latest in ICT to develop students literacy, numeracy, study skills and social skills.
- Meet regularly with Special Educational Needs Team to record, review and update relevant reports and issues.
- Keep informed of current educational research, thinking, methodology and legislation in the area of Special Educational Needs.

- Maintaining regular planning and progress records or equivalent for each individual in receipt of Learning Support/Resource.

Role of Parents

- To support the policy and to co-operate fully with the school in its implementation.
- To bring to the attention of the school authorities any concern they may have in relation to the school's provision for the Special Educational Needs of students.
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Role of Students

- To co-operate fully with the school in the implementation of the policy.
- To offer suggestions for improving the service to students with special needs.