

Realt Na Mara G.N.S

Special Education Needs Policy

Whole School Staff Statement:

Our school aims to ensure that each pupil is given the maximum opportunity and support to develop her full potential and to foster within her, positive self-esteem.

Rationale for Special Needs Policy:

This policy has been devised in accordance with recent Department Circulars regarding Special Needs Education.

Aims of Learning Support:

The principal aim of Learning Support is to optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving Primary School. Our school intends to achieve this aim through a whole-school and co-coordinated approach.

Further Aims:

- To provide supplementary teaching and additional support and resources to pupils in English and Mathematics.
- To provide an improved self-image for the child through praise, encouragement, and recognition of personal progress and success.
- To enable pupils to become independent learners.
- To provide early intervention programmes in Junior Classes aimed at preventing difficulties in learning.
- To promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole school policies for learning support for pupils.
- To confer with parents and outside agencies in order to plan the best support for each child.
- To carry out screening tests in English and Mathematics in order to highlight those pupils in need of support.
- To carry out diagnostic tests in order to devise appropriate programmes to help pupils with needs.

Enrolment policy of children with special needs:

Realt na Mara, GNS, is non-selective academically, and welcomes children of varying abilities. Enrolment of children with special needs will be dependent on the provision of appropriate resources and facilities for those children. Realt na Mara, GNS, seeks to provide for the needs of each individual child and to recognise that children with special education needs may learn at a different pace and in a different way from other children.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Role of the Principal Teacher:

The Principal has overall responsibility for the development, implementation and co-ordination of the school policies on Learning Support and Special Needs.

The Principal:

- Monitors the implementation of the school plan and the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching.
- Ensures that a tracking system is maintained at whole school level to monitor the progress of all the school's children and especially those with learning difficulties.
- Maintains and keeps files as regards psychological testing and tracking.
- Arranges for referrals of pupil assessments to outside agencies.
- Co-ordinates the caseloads and work schedules of learning support, resource teacher and language support.

Role of the Class Teacher:

"The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in the class, including those selected for supplementary teaching". (Learning Support Guidelines page 42).

- To differentiate the class curriculum appropriately so as to optimize the learning of all pupils within the class and to help the pupils with special needs to achieve success at their own levels in class.
- 1) Group teaching 2) Modifying presentation and questioning techniques to maximize the involvement of all pupils in the class 3) Placing emphasis on oral language development across the curriculum.

- To contribute to the development of learning targets and their implementation by collaborating with the SEN teacher in the development of an Individual profile and Learning Programme.
- To implement appropriate activities to help attain these targets.
- To discuss and review with the Learning Support teacher the results of screening and diagnostic assessments and to decide the type of intervention needed to best meet the needs of pupils.
- To make initial contact with parents to discuss concerns about their child's progress and to seek the approval of the parents to proceed with further assessment.
- To be aware of, to be kept updated and to consult with relevant professionals about the special needs of children with mild or specific learning difficulties within the class.
- The SEN teacher co-ordinates with the class teachers in the implementation of the staged approach to special education needs. (DES circular Special.Ed. 24/03)

Staged Approach to Learning Support:

Our approach to learning support is a staged one.

Stage 1: A class teacher or a parent may have concerns about the academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development of certain pupils. The teacher will then administer screening measures, which may include screening checklists or standardized tests for older children. The class teacher will then draw up a short, simple plan for extra help within the normal classroom setting within the relevant areas of learning and/or behaviour management. The success of the plan will be reviewed on a regular basis with appropriate parental involvement. If concern remains after approximately two terms, (age dependent) the Special Education Support Team will be consulted about the desirability of a move to Stage 2.

Stage 2: If the class teacher's plan fails to achieve the desired outcome for children with learning difficulties then the child should be referred to the Learning Support Teacher for further diagnostic testing. Parental permission will be needed for this referral. If results indicate that supplementary teaching would be beneficial then this should be arranged. Parents and Class teacher will be involved with Learning Support teacher in drawing up the learning plan. Progress will be reviewed regularly. If significant concerns remain after a period of at least one school term then it may be necessary to implement Stage 3. In the case of children with emotional or behavioural difficulties it is recognized that, with serious difficulties, more urgent action may be needed. In these cases the child's needs should, with parental permission, be discussed with the relevant

NEPS psychologist or referred to the clinical services of the Health Board. This may lead to a more detailed plan of behavioural management at home, in class, and or referral for further specialist assessment (Stage 3).

Stage 3:

At this stage the school formally requests a consultation and where appropriate, an assessment of need from a specialist outside the school in respect of children who have failed to make progress after being given supplementary teaching or behavioural management programmes. Such specialist advice may be sought from psychologists, paediatricians, speech and language therapists, etc. The parents will be consulted throughout the process.

The Role of the Special Education Needs Teacher:

A) Pupils

- To identify pupils with learning/language needs by means of screening and diagnostic tests and from the recommendation of class teachers.
- To administer and score screening and diagnostic tests.
- To develop and plan a programme of work (IPLP) to support the pupils identified as having learning needs.
- To implement the programme of intervention and to continually evaluate its effectiveness.
- To maintain appropriate records of pupils taught and programmes implemented.
- To co-ordinate, write and implement I.E.P.'s for pupils with low incidence resource hours.

B) Class Teacher

- To liaise with the class teacher in the identification of pupils in need of support and the interventions required.
- To ensure that the class teacher is informed of the progress of S.E.N. pupils.
- To advise on how teachers may differentiate lessons to support S.E.N. pupils.
- To collaborate with the class teacher in devising strategies by which SNA's may support the S.E.N. pupil.

C) Parents

- To inform parents of learning targets and the progress of their child.
- To advise parents on how they may support their child's learning at home.
- To meet with parents of each pupil selected for diagnostic assessment and to discuss outcomes.
- Decide targets for each pupil's I.E.P. with parents, including the actions to be taken to meet those targets at home and in school.
- Communicate on an ongoing basis with parents with positive affirmation of progress and early identification of difficulties.
- Advise and consult with parents when supplementary teaching is discontinued and identify ways pupil can be continually supported at home.
- Demonstrate teaching strategies to parents that will help with the child's learning.

D) Programmes

- To participate in intervention programmes when identified (Lift Off to Literacy ,Mata sa Rang, Peer Reading, Toe by Toe, Power of Plus One /Two.
- To provide in class support and team teaching when necessary.
- To participate in station teaching programmes.
- To attend courses and to keep informed of the latest thinking with regard to Special Education teaching.

E) Other

- To acquire and maintain suitable teaching and learning resources for pupils with S.E.N.
- To participate in on-going policy development and organisation.

The Special Needs Team:

Teachers working in Special Education in Realt na Mara will combine the role of Resource Teacher, Learning Support Teacher and Language Support teacher

The Principal, Learning Support teacher, Resource teacher and Language Support teacher will work as a Special Needs team, collaborating, consulting and planning workloads and timetables to best implement this school policy to support children with special educational needs within our school. The teachers will meet on a termly basis or as needs arise to discuss programmes of work, resources, I.E.P. and any recent information obtained from outside agencies which relates to pupils with special needs.

The Role of Parents:

Parental contribution to children's learning programmes has a hugely positive influence on the overall progress and self-esteem of children with learning difficulties.

Parents can support the work of the school and learning support by:

- Providing learning activities at home in literacy and numeracy.
- Encouraging the use of ICT at home to support learning English and/or Maths.
- Reading stories to their child.
- Paired reading sessions.
- Implementing suggested home based activities outlined in the child's I.E.P.
- Keeping school informed of progress observed in their child's learning.
- Attending meetings with learning support teachers and class teachers regarding I.E.P.'s, progress and assessments.

The Role of Pupils:

The involvement of pupils in developing, implementing and reviewing their own learning programme is important for them to become independent learners. Pupils attending learning support will learn to take responsibility for their own learning as appropriate:

- By becoming familiar with short-term targets that have been set for them.
- By applying learning strategies taught during support teaching to the classroom environment.
- By evaluating their own programme and by self-assessing their work.

- By becoming aware of their own strengths, weaknesses and needs.
- Demonstrate teaching strategies to parents that will help with the child's learning.

Role of Board of Management:

To oversee implementation and review of the Learning Support policy and the provision of adequate resources, accommodation and storage.

Provision of Learning Support by L.S. Teacher:

The L.S. teacher devises and implements an early intervention programme for intensive small group or one to one tutoring in English and Maths for selected pupils. This may be done in the LS room or as in-class support, as appropriate.

- Conducts an initial diagnostic assessment of each pupil who has been identified as having learning difficulties and records findings in pupils file or profile.
- Prepares plans and progress records for each group or individual (IPLP/IEP).
- Monitors and records progress regarding learning targets, short-term objectives and records observations in weekly record.
- Reviews progress at the end of instructional term.
- Classes will be intensive in terms of frequency.
- The learning Support teacher makes a supplementary teaching provision for an instructional term of 13-20 weeks.
- One to one teaching may be provided where small group teaching has not been effective.
- Identify the children within the school for whom English is not a first language and need extra language support.

Selection of Pupils for Learning Support:

Policy of pupil selection:

- Children who have been defined as having a low incidence disability or a high incidence disability will be given recommended time allocation for resource hours wherever possible. Any student who has been assessed by a psychologist and has a recommendation of supplementary/resource hours will be given priority.
- Priority for learning support will be given to pupils who perform at or below the 20th percentile in the Drumcondra English Test; Junior Classes will be prioritised over Senior Classes.
- The principle of Early Intervention applies; therefore the pupils from Senior Infants to Second Class are given priority in the allocation of learning support programmes ;Lift- Off to Literacy, Station teaching.
- Priority for learning support will be given to pupils who perform at or below the 20th percentile based on the Drumcondra Maths Tests; Junior classes will be given priority then Senior classes will be offered support.
- Pupils displaying dyslexia tendencies are monitored especially where there is a known family history of dyslexia.

- Language support to be given to students who require English language so that they can participate as fully as they possibly can in the class activities.
- There will be flexibility to provide for children who are not in the 20th percentile but require supplementary teaching. This will be dependent on available time slots and overall caseload.

Procedure Following Screening

Preliminary Screening

Preliminary screening of pupils by their teacher is conducted through the administration of one or more screening tests, curriculum profiles, checklists and observations.

- Junior & Senior Infant Classes:

Drumcondra English Profiles, Screening checklists and profiles, Teacher observations and records, Middle Infants Standard Tests (MIST Tests)

- From First to Sixth classes:

Drumcondra English Profiles, Curriculum checklists, Drumcondra English Test, Drumcondra Maths Test, Drumcondra Spelling Test.

Selection for Diagnostic Assessment

Following consultation with the class teacher a cut off point is applied to screening test results. Priority is given to pupils who achieve scores at or below 20th percentile rank or a below average result on the MIST test. Consultation with the class teacher and the support team will select pupils for further diagnostic assessment. The class teacher will inform the parents of results and seek consent for this diagnostic assessment.

Diagnostic Assessment

After consultation with the class teacher, and with parental consent, the SEN teacher will administer initial diagnostic assessment. The objectives of this diagnostic assessment are:

- To identify the aspects of English and/or Maths in which the pupil has particular strengths or difficulties.
- To identify, gather and collate information essential for the completion of the IPLP.
- To identify the needs of the pupil and the appropriate level and type of learning support required.

Content of Diagnostic Assessment for Emergent Literacy Stage

- ❖ Print awareness
- ❖ Print conventions
- ❖ Phonemic awareness and ability to rhyme word
- ❖ Letter identification
- ❖ Knowledge of letter sounds
- ❖ Word recognition
- ❖ Visual discrimination
- ❖ Word identification skills
- ❖ Spelling
- ❖ Writing
- ❖ Auditory skills- sequencing and discrimination

Content of Diagnostic assessment for pupils who have moved beyond Early Stages of Literacy

- ❖ Reading accuracy.
- ❖ Sentence and passage comprehension.
- ❖ Word recognition.
- ❖ Vocabulary meaning.
- ❖ Word analysis skills.
- ❖ Miscue analysis.
- ❖ Reading fluency.
- ❖ Study skills.
- ❖ Spelling ability.
- ❖ Handwriting skills.
- ❖ Free written expression.
- ❖ Social adjustment
- ❖ Oral language proficiency i.e. listening skills, comprehension and expressive language
- ❖ Motivation to learn

Other tests that are administered to help profile the pupil include:

- Early Literacy Test (4years-6month – 7years 6 months)
- Belfield Infant Assessment Profile
- Neale Analysis of Reading Ability-nfer Nelson
- N.R.I.T. (Non Reading Intelligence Tests)
- Otis Lennon- IQ Test
- BAS Word Reading Test
- Aston Index incorporating Schonell Spelling test
- The Assessment File- Kickstart Publications
- Phonic skills Assessment- Kickstart Publications

- Dyslexia Screening Test
- Dolch Sight Vocabulary 220 words
- 100 most frequently used words in spelling
- Reading Running record

In relation to diagnostic assessment of mathematics the following areas will be focused on:

- Conservation of number.
 - Understanding of Math's concepts and the language of Math's.
 - Number sense.
 - Computation Skills.
 - Application of skills.
 - Problem solving strategies.
 - Recall of number facts.
 - Mathematical reasoning.
- ❖ The Drumcondra Maths test will be the principal test used for mathematical assessment and diagnosis. Other tests that are administered to help profile the pupil include: Basic Number Diagnostic Test-Bill Gillham , Quest, Profile of Mathematical Skills- Norman France

Summarising the Results of Diagnostic Assessment

The results of diagnostic assessment are recorded for each pupil. This profile will also include:

- Previous test results.
- Relevant information from parents, class teachers and other professionals.
- Identification of the pupil's particular needs.

Procedures for further Assessment

After diagnostic assessment and a completed instructional term of learning support, each child's progress will be reviewed. If there are concerns expressed by the class teacher, support teacher and parents, further psychological assessment will be explored. The SEN teacher will seek the advice of NEPS psychologist and discuss the test results and concerns about the pupil. Based on the advice received, the application for a full assessment, if required, will be completed by

the SEN Teacher. This will involve detailed information gathering from all sources involved, to compile a comprehensive report for the psychologist.

In the event of a parent refusing consent for diagnostic assessment or referral for further assessment, a letter stating this refusal and recognizing the school's efforts to arrange assessment will be required from the parent.

Programme Planning and Intervention

Following diagnostic assessment and prior to the commencement of supplementary teaching the Special Needs Team will decide on who will provide the necessary support required. The appointed teacher will then consult with the parents and the class teacher to discuss other elements of learning that will be addressed during assessment and will give a wider picture of the pupils needs.

Individual programme planning for each pupil is developed. After the collection of all relevant information, pupils learning strengths and needs are specified and formulated to choose short term learning targets and activities. An inclusive approach involves class teachers, parents and pupils in devising these targets.

Individual Educational Plans

The writing and developing of the I.E.P.'s will be in accordance with the Learning Support guidelines. Parents and other relevant parties will be informed and invited to contribute.

I.E.P.'s include:

- Details of the pupil's age and class.
- Current teachers.
- Assessment details.
- Strengths.
- Areas of difficulties.
- Relevant information.
- Organizational details.
- Timetabling of sessions.
- Individual or group sessions.
- Learning targets and activities to meet those targets.

An I.E.P. is prepared for each pupil receiving resource hours. S.N.A.'s working with pupils is also involved in developing and implementing the targets within the I.E.P. A copy of each I.E.P. is given to the school principal, the class teacher and SNA and filed in the SET records.

Weekly Planning and Progress Records

Each week's work is planned in advance. Every attempt is made to support the class work in parallel planning. Regular contact with class teachers is essential for this to succeed. Daily activities for each group are recorded in weekly records.

Testing: The following tests will be conducted and corrected by the class teacher:

- M.I.S.T. Spring term (Senior Infants)
- Drumcondra English Test- (1st – 6th) Summer term
- Drumcondra Maths Test (1st – 6th) Summer term
- Drumcondra Spellings Test (1st – 6th) Summer term

Intervention Programmes:

- 1) Junior Infants – 2nd Class -Supplementary Reading Programme
- 2) Senior Infants to Second Class – Lift-Off to Literacy
- 3) 2nd Class to 6th Class with dyslexic tendencies- Toe by Toe by Keda Cowling
- 4) Senior Infants/1st Class - Forward Together Programme
- 5) Mathematics: Mata sa Rang, Numicon Maths Programme, Power of Plus One/Two
- 6) Station teaching- Literacy/ Maths

In Class Support:

When in-class support has been decided as the best action in assisting a pupil or a number of pupils, it will be necessary that appropriate timetabling and planning of this time will take place. This planning should ensure that efficient use of the LS/RT teacher and class teacher's time.

Timetabling

- The provision of Learning Support is in addition to the regular class teaching in English and Maths.
- Efforts are made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curricular area each time they attend Learning Support.
- The provision of Learning support may include withdrawal of pupils from their classroom and/or in –class tuition.

- In class support, if appropriate, will be jointly designed and monitored by the Class Teacher and the Learning Support Teacher.

Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching

- In general, children should not stay for more than 2 years in Supplementary Teaching unless they are still at or below the 20th percentile.
- Each child will normally attend language support classes for a period not exceeding two years.
- Following the end of instructional term, review as detailed above, a decision is made to continue/discontinue the provision of supplementary teaching. The criteria on which this decision is made include: A) Has the pupil achieved some/all of the learning targets set. B) Will the pupil be able to cope in the classroom learning context?
- The decision-making process involves consultation between the Class Teacher, the SEN Teacher and the pupil's parents and account is also taken of the overall learning Support demands in the school.

Recognising the More Able/Talented Children

- More able/talented children are identified as those who score at or above the 95th percentile on standardised tests. The class teacher will implement a differentiated programme. The resources include areas such as mathematical reasoning, comprehension, puzzles, games and ICT.

Referral to out of School Agencies

- The SEN Teacher co-ordinates the referral of pupils to outside agencies, e.g. educational psychologist
- The principal and/or SEN Teacher and/or Class Teacher meet with the parents to discuss the need for the referral and to seek consent.
- The Class Teacher completes the necessary form in consultation with appropriate school personnel.
- The external profession visits the school to meet, parents, principal, class teacher and the SEN teacher as appropriate and assessment is conducted.
- This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed.
- When 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.

Centralising data for learning Support

- Due to their confidential nature, all reports e.g. psychological, medical, occupational/speech therapy for children attending learning Support/Resource are kept in a locked centralised area. A copy of a report may be issued to a teacher on the learning support team who is working with the pupil in question. However copies of reports are not given to class teachers. Class teachers may borrow a report to gain information regarding a pupil in their class but must return it thereafter to the centralised.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in September 2014

John ~~Wright~~
1/09/14

Sample Refusal Letter

We/I _____ (Parent/Guardian) do not wish our child _____ to receive Learning Support in Realt na Mara Girls' National School. We/I understand that her class teacher has recommended further diagnostic assessment but we/I do not wish this to be administered at this time.

Signed _____ (Parent/Guardian)

_____ (School Principal)

Date: