1. **Rationale**

* It is necessary to devise a policy on Special Educational Needs at this time for the following reasons: *.*
  + *To cater for the enrolment of pupils with special education needs in a mainstream setting*
  + *To comply with legislation and department circulars*
  + *To streamline the provision of special needs support in the school*

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004 (EPSEN), Section 1, defines a *special educational need as “ a restriction in capacity to participate in and benefit from education due to 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 and cognate words shall be construed accordingly”*

*Learning Support Guidelines, 2000, p. 1 refers to pupils whose achievement is at a very low level and who are at risk of not reaching adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.*

* The school community has discussed *Inclusion* and what it means in the context of this school cf policy on equality of Access and Participation.
* This policy covers those children who traditionally attended learning support. A separate Policy for those with exceptional ability is required.

1. **Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school**

This policy relates strongly to the school’s mission statement:

*Our school embodies Christian, Catholic values which emphasises compassion, care, good work ethos, striving for excellence and respect for all, irrespective of race, religion or social status*

1. **Aims**

* *To enable pupils of all abilities to avail of and benefit from an appropriate education.*
* *To outline our whole school approach to teaching/learning in relation to pupils with special educational needs.*
* *To set out procedures for the enrolment of child/ren with special needs in the school.*
* *To assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child in our school.*
* *To outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs.*
* *To establish communication structures for the involvement of all the partners in the education of pupils with special educational needs. (Learning Support Guidelines)*

1. **Format**

These guidelines are laid out as follows:

1. Enrolment of children with identified special educational needs
2. Provision for children with emerging special educational needs (The Staged Approach)

Stage 1/Class Support: Procedures for the early identification, screening and addressing of the special educational needs of certain children

Stage 2/School Support: Referral to Special Educational Needs Teacher

Stage 3/School Support Plus: Consultation or referral for assessment to outside specialist

1. Drafting and Implementing an Education Plan
2. Inclusion
3. Deployment of staff
4. Collaboration and communication
5. Resources
6. Transfer to post primary school or to another primary school
7. Record Keeping
8. Other related policies

**1.0** **Enrolment of children with identified special educational needs (Refer to enrolment policy)**

(1) EPSEN Act 2004, Section 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*

1. *b) The effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated”*

(2) Education Act 1998: 15.-(2) d*. A board shall…. publish… the policy of the school concerning admission to and participation in the school, including the policy of the school relating to…. the participation by students with disabilities or who have other special educational needs, 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 ….*

* Prior to the child’s enrolment, the school will acquaint themselves with a child’s special needs and whether these are categorised as High Incidence or Low Incidence by:
* Arranging a meeting between parents/principal/class teacher/special needs staff and SENO, as appropriate.
* Obtaining copies/details of reports, assessments etc. from SENO/ parents.
* A decision will be reached as to whether the pupil should receive support at the level of Stage 1, Stage 2 or Stage 3 of the Staged Approach. The decision will be based on information from parents and relevant documentation accompanying the child and professional opinions of teacher/principal, l support staff of transferring school. ( cf Circular 02/05)
* The following steps may be taken to ensure a smooth transition to school for both the pupil and the school:
* Parental visits to school
* Pupil visits to school
* Staff visits to special schools/special units where appropriate
* Making all school employees and pupils aware of the need for inclusion (EPSEN Act)
* Liaison with SENO to arrange for additional personnel, resources, training
* Establish a “Buddy” system to support pupils with special needs
* If there are health and safety issues arising from the child’s mobility and care needs, these can be identified and the following strategies will developed to address them: *access, toilets, supervision, administration of medicine, intimate care, course for SNA e.g. lifting techniques* 
  1. **Children with emerging special educational needs: The Staged Approach** *(See Circular 02/05 and Special Educational Needs, A Continuum of Support - Guidelines for Teachers, NEPS, 2007)*

**Stage 1/Class Support**: Procedures for the early identification, screening and addressing of the SEN of certain children.

Teachers identify concernsre the academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development of a child by using the following strategies:

*Teacher observation, parental observations, use of simple teacher designed checklists* (reference:Common Sense Methods for Children with Special Needs,Westwood p. 22)*, Infant profiling, or screening measures etc.*

* Concerns are documented using a Class Support File.
* The following are a list of agreed screening measures that are used to assess Literacy/Numeracy Development in the school: *Jolly Phonics Assessment; Drumcondra Reading standardised test, Sigma T Mathematics Assessment; Drumcondra profiles; BIAP; Special Educational Needs – A Continuum of Support.* The Booklet *Behavioural, Emotional & Social Difficulties* – *A Continuum of Support* is used to assess social and emotional development The *NRIT* is also used.
* Teacher arranges to meet parent to express concerns and gain further background information on pupil with a view to setting agreed goals for progress.
* SET can support class teachers at Stage 1. This is this facilitated by informing SET teacher for advice and the Principal if necessary.
* If concern remains after a number of reviews, the Special Education Support Team in the School may be consulted about the desirability of a move to Stage 2. Parents, principal, SEN teacher(s) as well as class teacher are involved in this decision (See Appendix 1 below)
* If concerns seem to warrant the provision of support at Stage 3 level referral will be made to other agencies e.g. Psychologist.

**Stage 2/School Support. Referral to Special Educational Support Teacher** *(DES Learning Support Guidelines p. 57 and Special Educational Needs, A Continuum of Support - Guidelines for Teachers, NEPS, 2007)*

* The factors to be considered in determining a child’s need for supplementary teaching may include the following: a*ssessment results, teacher recommendation, parents’ concerns and availability of resources*
* The Learning Support teacher seeks parental consent for further diagnostic testing. Written consent is deemed most appropriate.
* The sensitivities of parents be addressed through earlyand regular contact with parent to explain how learning support can address their child’s learning need through a meeting
* The school will respond to the reluctance or refusal of a parent to consent to further testing by making the case based on the best possible outcome for the child.
* There is a standard consent form in use in the school. There is a section to indicate refusal of service. Refusals are recorded and kept on file.
* The diagnostic tests in use in the school are: YARC; Neale Analysis, Bangor Dyslexic Test; Jackson Phonics. The SET teachers administer and interpret them.
* Children with similar needs are grouped Circular 02/05 p. 7. (See *Appendix 2*). Teaching may include a mixture of withdrawal and in-class support.
* Preparation of an Individual Profile Learning Plan *(IPLP)School Support File*
* *Principal, SET, Classroom teacher, Parents, Pupils* have input for drawing up of a child’s IPLP - ( p. 68 L.S. Guidelines) Learning Support teacher is responsible for gathering of information and finalising of document.
* Fortnightly plans are prepared for groups where appropriate.
* There are two instructional terms for SET are in the school year. Instructional terms one runs from end of September to end of January and instructional term two runs from end of February to mid June. This allows for diagnostic testing and planning for IPLP at the beginning and review of targets set at end.
* Pupil progress is reviewed at the end of each instructional term by examining whether or not success criteria were reached. Parents and class teachers are involved in this.
* Decisions for reducing or discontinuing supplementary teaching are based on scores from most recent Standardised tests:

**Order of children to receive learning support based on assessment:**

* + 1. Children performing on or below the 10th percentile in standardised test of achievement in reading or equivalent in *Jolly Phonics Assessment*.
    2. Senior Infants – 2nd class – early intervention programmes for low achievers in English based on class teacher’s observations and recommendations.
    3. Pupils who have special educational needs arising from high incidence disabilities (borderline mild general learning disability, mild general learning disability and specific learning disability).
    4. Children performing below the 10th percentile in standardised test of achievement in Mathematics.
    5. Senior Infants / First class – early intervention programmes for low achievers in Mathematics based on class teacher’s observations and recommendations.
    6. Pupils performing below the 20th percentile in standardised test of achievement in reading.
    7. Pupils performing below the 20th percentile in standardised test of achievement in Mathematics.
    8. Children above the 25th percentile are not normally entitled to Learning support.
    9. Arrangements for providing supplementary teaching to pupils in the middle/senior section who experience very low achievement.

\*EAL teacher takes EAL pupils for a maximum of 2 years.

\*\*Pupils who have an assessed low incidence need. (eg Speech and Language disorder; hearing impairment; ASD; EBD; ADD; DCD) will also be prioritised (See Stage Three).

* The maximum number of pupils in the cluster is approximately 30 pupils. Priority will be given to those pupils whose achievement is lowest in agreed standardised tests. If the targets have been met and the pupil is performing above the percentile laid down in the criteria learning support will be discontinued
* If significant concerns remain after a number of reviews, it may be necessary to implement Stage 3.Pupils are prioritised at regular SET meetings involving Principal and SEN staff. The Learning Support/Resource teacher will complete the referral form in conjunction with the class teacher and parent but overall responsibility will lie with the Deputy & Principal.

Stage 3/School Support Plus. Consultation or referral for assessment to outside specialist *(See Special Educational Needs A Continuum of Support - Guidelines for Teachers, NEPS, 2007)*

* + The procedures for involving parents in a decision to request an assessment by an outside specialist are: to meet with the parent and seek written permission. Concerns will have been expressed at an earlier stage.
  + St Fiacc’s refers to an Educational Psychologist under the NEPs scheme.
  + The Deputy and SEN staff has responsibility for making the referral and liaison with the specialist.
  + The documentation that needs to be collected would include: IPLPs, relevant reports and assessments. The Deputy and SEN staff will co-ordinate this.
  + Assessments take place in the Deputy Principal’s office as it is deemed the most appropriate setting.
  + In the event of limited availability of assessments through NEPS, decisions are reached by the SET. Prioritisation is based on: Pupils in Sixth; Pupils who have moved through the Staged Approach without success, early intervention.
  + If parents have had assessments carried out privately the school will seek to follow the recommendations of the Report. If extra hours are required then the school will apply for same.

**3.0 Drafting and implementing an Individual Education Plan/School Support Plus File (for pupils at Stage 3) *see Chapters 2 and 3, Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process, NCSE***

* The purposes of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is to identify the Priority learning needs of the pupil and set specific targets for each instructional term.
* The information included in an IEP are:
  + - Learning strengths: based on teacher observation, parent observations, SNA observation.
    - Learning needs: based on psychological report, teacher input, parental input, pupil input.
    - Learning targets - *See page 34 Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process, NCSE*
* There is an agreed format in use throughout the school. The headings included are based on *(See Special Educational Needs A Continuum of Support – Resource Pack for Teachers, NEPS, 2007 and Appendix 4 below*
* An IEP covers 10-12 weeks approximately.
* IEP Meetings
  + - The Resource teacher has responsibility for co-ordination of the IEP.
    - Parents, teachers, pupils, SNAs participates in the preparation of education plans.
    - Participation is facilitated through meetings.
    - The pupil be included in the process by identifying their learning styles and interests.
    - The class teacher and parents get a copy of the plan and a copy is placed on file.
* Progress is reviewed periodically with the class teacher and at the end of each instructional term with parents
* If the education plan identifies resources over and above those normally available in a mainstream school setting, the Principal and Deputy will bring this to the attention of the SENO and/or the NCSE.
* The Deputy is responsible for ongoing consultations with psychologists, SENO, others.
* Procedures for co-ordination of education plans from class to class and, sharing relevant information between staff, school and parents: All Reports are filed in Principal’s Office and Recommendations and IEPs are available for viewing on *Aladdin*.

**4.0 Inclusion (See Policy of Access and Participation)**

* Practical steps that are in place to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are included as fully as possible in the life of the school and the classroom include:
  + 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. This includes Homework.
  + Providing learning activities and materials 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 – peer tutoring- paired reading]
  + in-class support.

**Team Teaching**

We, in St. Fiacc’s N.S., believe in the benefits of Team Teaching and strive to implement it in Junior Infants – Second Classes in the area of Literacy. The Learning Support teachers and relevant class teachers work together, plan, conduct and evaluate the learning activities for the same group of pupils. The staff is organised into groups to enhance teaching of the subject. The Team Teaching calendar is organised in terms:

September-December : Senior Infants, First & Second Classes

January-April : First & Second Class; Senior Infants

May-June : Junior Infants, Senior Infants, First Class

* In class support is implement in the middle and senior classes where timetabling allows.

## 5. 0 Deployment of Staff

* The school ensures the most effective deployment of staff in meeting the overall SEN requirements of the school by taking into account the experience/expertise of teachers.
* The school presently has seven Special Needs Teachers, one EAL teacher and one part time Special Needs Teacher (7.5 hrs).
* SNAs play an important role in supporting pupils with special needs in the school when employed.

### **Duties and Role of the Special Needs Assistant.**

#### Their duties are assigned by the principal teacher in accordance with Circular 10/76:

#### Duties and responsibilities of the SNA are sanctioned by the BOM. The class teacher will supervise their work.

Those duties involve tasks of a non-teaching nature such as:

1. Preparation and tidying up of classrooms in which the pupil with special needs is being taught.
2. Assisting children to board and alight from school buses. Where necessary, travel as escort on school buses may be required.
3. Special assistance as necessary for pupils with particular difficulties e.g. helping physically disabled pupils with typing or writing.
4. Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene.
5. Assisting on out of school visits, walks and similar activities.
6. Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods.
7. Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom.
8. General assistance to the teacher, under the direction of the principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature. (special needs assistants may not act either as substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class).

Where a special needs assistant has been appointed to assist a school in catering for a specific pupil, duties should be modified to support the particular needs of the pupil concerned.

**6.0 Collaboration and Communication**

* Arrangements in place to facilitate collaboration between those involved in the child’s education are: SEN teachers meet parents at least once a year formally. SET meet half-termly. Class teachers are met for an interim review. Other Professionals are met where possible.
* It is necessary to make specific arrangements for formal consultations:
  + Meetings are arranged as described above.
  + Specific time is set aside.

1. **Resources**

* Resources available in the school include: SEN Rooms, a range of Screening and Diagnostic test kits as previously mentioned, a library of SET literature. There is not yet an inventory of resources that all teachers can use.
* The SEN staff is responsible for sourcing and acquiring additional resources.
* Procedures in place for tracking, storing and maintaining these resources are drawing up an inventory of Resources. The SEN staff has responsibility for this.
* All staff have access to resources but must inform Deputy.
* There are no issues around access to and use of resources among schools who share staff provided the materials are returned to Base school.

**8.0 Transfer to post-primary**

* Procedures that would assist a smooth transition for pupils with special needs to post primary education include opening communication with SET in Post Primary, visiting the schools where necessary, including transition in 6th class SPHE lessons and meeting Principal/Deputy/SEN teachers prior to transfer.
* Targets based on transition are included in Instructional Term 2.
* All academic and social progress is discussed where written consent has been provided.

**9.0 Record Keeping**

* Records maintained on children with SEN include: Assessments, IEPs/IPLPs, consent forms, Reviews.
* Resource teachers, Secretary, Principal, SENO, psychologist, inspector, parents have access to these records. Note: Bearing in mind the child’s entitlement to confidentiality, access is on a need to know basis.
* The records are stored in secure filing cabinets in the Principal’s Office. Records are also available on the school’s IT system *Aladdin*. This allows for ease of access while still remaining secure. In a cluster Records pertaining to each school are stored in that school.
* Records are retained until the child is 21. This is covered in the school’s policy on record keeping.
* Records are updated periodically. SET staff has responsibility for contributing to a child’s file.
* Information concerning attendance and the child’s educational progressare made available to other agencies, including other schools when the pupil transfers. (*Under Section 28 of the Education Welfare Act 2000, it is a requirement of the Board of Management that information concerning attendance and the child’s educational progress be communicated between schools).*

**10.0 Other related policies**

* The Code of Behaviour/Anti Bullying Policy recognises special needs in the area of behavioural and emotional difficulties.
* The school’s curricular and organisational policies and plans take into account the needs of pupils with SEN *e.g. differentiation of content and methodologies in curriculum areas*.
* Data Protection; Record Keeping and Assessment policies

**Success Criteria**

Some practical indicators of the success of the policy:

* Inclusion of pupils with special needs into our school
* Progress of pupils with special needs in our school (assessments)
* Feedback from teaching staff, special needs assistant, pupils, psychologists
* Inspector’s Report.

**Roles and Responsibility**.

The people who have particular responsibilities for aspects of the policy include:

* *Parents, DES, Psychologist, Teaching staff, Principal and SEN staff.*

***Appendix 1***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **A Staged Approach to Meeting the Needs of Pupils with Special Educational Needs** | | |
| **Observation** | **Process** | **Personnel Involved** |
| **Stage 1 (class support)**  Class teacher/parent has concerns regarding a pupil’s academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development | Class teacher administers appropriate screening measures. Class teacher devises a plan, which aims to meet pupil’s identified needs within the normal classroom setting. The success of this plan is regularly reviewed in consultation with parents. | * ***Class teacher*** * ***Parent***   ***Additional Supports Available***   * ***Teacher*** * ***NEPS Psychologist*** |
| ***If concern remains after a number of reviews, the Special Education Support Team in the School may be consulted about the desirability of a move to Stage 2*** | | |
| **Stage 2 (school support)**  Child is referred to learning support teacher, with parental permission for further diagnostic testing. | If diagnostic testing indicates that supplementary teaching would be beneficial, this is arranged. Parent, class teacher and learning support teacher collaborate in devising, implementing and reviewing the pupil’s learning plan. | * ***Class teacher*** * ***Parent*** * ***Learning Support Teacher***   ***Additional Supports Available***   * ***Home School Liaison*** * ***Teacher*** * ***NEPS Psychologist*** * ***Other Support Staff and Services available to school*** |
| ***If significant concerns remain after a number of reviews, it may be necessary to implement Stage 3*** | | |
| **Stage 3 (school support plus)**  School formally requests a consultation, and, where appropriate, an assessment of need from a specialist outside the school. | A learning plan is devised by personnel involved, which includes identification of any additional available resources that are considered necessary in order to implement the plan. Parents should be fully consulted throughout this process. This learning plan should be subject to regular reviews, leading to revisions of the learning plan and referral for specialist review as necessary.  **Any private practitioner engaged by a school at Stage 3 should have the relevant Department of Education and Science Circulars and guidance notes drawn to their attention.** | * ***Class teacher*** * ***Parent*** * ***Learning Support Teacher*** * ***Resource Teacher (if available)*** * ***Relevant Specialist***   ***Additional Supports Available***   * ***NEPS Psychologist*** * ***Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments*** * ***Speech and Language Therapist*** * ***Occupational Therapist*** * ***Psychiatrist*** * ***Audiologist*** * ***Paediatrician*** |

**Planning in Individual Schools *(from Circular 02/05)***

In planning to meet the special educational needs of pupils, schools should plan in a manner consistent with the size of the school, the learning profile of the pupils with special educational needs, and the expertise of the school staff.

As stated in Circular 24/03, the over-riding principle is that resources should be deployed in individual schools in the manner that best meets the needs of the pupils with special educational needs in that school*.* In addition to adherence to the principles set out in Section 4, the following factors should be considered in order to achieve this:

* **Interventions with pupils should be delivered in a manner that best meets the needs identified, which may be through group or individual teaching.**
* **Intervention with pupils at stages II and III should include a classroom support plan to ensure that the pupils’ needs are met for the whole of the school day.**
* **The development of literacy and numeracy skills will be a major component of many interventions at stages II and III. However, special educational needs in areas such as oral language, social interaction, behaviour and application to learning tasks may also need to be addressed.**

***Appendix 2***

**Outline of a possible approach to planning for the deployment of resources at individual school level**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Step 1** | Identify all the pupils in need of additional teaching support, both learning-support teaching and resource teaching and including pupils who have special educational needs arising from high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities. |
|  |  |
| **Step 2** | Identify the level of intervention required on the basis of the pupils’ learning needs. (Stage II or Stage III).It is up to the school to decide whether one-to-one or group teaching, or a mixture of both, is the best type of support for each individual pupil, depending on the nature of their needs. |
|  |  |
| **Step 3** | Identify the members of the teaching staff who will be allocated to the identified pupils (all teachers who are appointed on foot of the general allocation model, allocations of additional teacher hours for the support of pupils with special educational needs arising from low-incidence disabilities, and any other allocation to the school). |
|  |  |
| **Step 4** | Allocate the identified staff members to the pupils, taking account of:   * the learning programme needs of individual pupils and groups of pupils, including whether it is short-term focused intervention or long-term, continuing support, * the time available to all pupils and the proportion of time needed by individual pupils and groups of pupils, based on identified needs, * the expertise and interest of the teachers, and * practical and logistical considerations, including increasing chances for LS/RTs and RTs to liaise with mainstream class teachers, availability of staff at times of greatest need, etc |
|  |  |
| **Step 5** | Cross-reference the programme needs of pupils with learning needs at stages II and III, and consider common needs that can be met by grouping to ensure effective and efficient teaching and learning approaches.Agree on which teacher or teachers will cater for these groups. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Step 6** | * Establish a tracking and recording system to ensure that a record is maintained of all pupils who are receiving additional teaching support and of their progress in response to the established interventions. * Learning-support/resource teachers and resource teachers should regularly and actively monitor the progress of the pupils who receive support under the general allocation model and those who have special educational needs arising from low-incidence disabilities, in consultation with parents, class teachers, and relevant professionals. This is particularly important in cases where support for a pupil has been increased, reduced or discontinued. |

Pupils in need of additional support and stage of intervention

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Pupils with learning needs at stage II**  **(literacy and numeracy needs)** | **Pupils with learning needs at stage II**  **(other special educational needs)** | **Pupils with learning needs at stage III**  **(pupils with high incidence disabilities)** | **Pupils with learning needs at stage III**  **(pupils with low incidence disabilities)** |
| **Junior Infants** |  |  |  |  |
| **Senior Infants** |  |  |  |  |
| **First Class** |  |  |  |  |
| **Second Class** |  |  |  |  |
| **Third Class** |  |  |  |  |
| **Fourth Class** |  |  |  |  |
| **Fifth Class** |  |  |  |  |
| **Sixth Class** |  |  |  |  |

Reference Section

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