

St. Louis Secondary School



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Special Educational Needs Policy

Section 1: Introduction, Vision, Aim, Ethos of St. Louis Secondary School

Section 2: Inclusion in St. Louis & Categories of SEN Section

Section 3: Rationale, Aims & Objectives of our SEN Policy Section

Section 4: Our SEN Team Section

Section 5: Communication Section

Section 6: SEN Model of Organisation Section

Section 1: Our Ethos

As a Catholic school, St. Louis Secondary School, Dundalk, aims to educate the whole person and to encourage the qualities of respect, truth, responsibility, happiness and excellence in a caring inclusive atmosphere.

We aim to:

- To provide a social and academic environment that fosters learning.
- To strive to ensure that Christian attitudes and values are knit into the fabric of school life.
- To provide through the curriculum, teaching methods and allocation of resources, teaching and learning situations which enable all pupils to:
 - Develop their intellectual capacity to the full.
 - Stimulate their curiosity and imagination.
 - Develop their aesthetic awareness; assist in their physical and moral development, and acquire an appetite for further knowledge and skills in later life.
- To prepare each pupil to be a responsible member of our democratic society, equipped to play an active part in its development.
- To be a caring community in which the individual is given a sense of significance and importance and a consciousness of the needs of others.
- To be a participating partner in the wider community, welcoming parents and other friends of the school to share in our work.

Section 2: Inclusion in St. Louis School

Special educational needs (SEN) are defined in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 as, “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...” As per our school admission policy, St. Louis School welcomes students with special educational needs (SEN) and endeavours to “provide that the education of people with such needs shall wherever possible take place in an inclusive environment” (Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004). The application process for a student with special educational needs will be the same as that of any other applicant. However, in order to assess the needs of an SEN student, the school authorities will meet with or phone the parents/guardians to discuss the student’s needs and the school’s ability to meet those needs. A copy of the student’s educational, medical, or where appropriate psychological reports will be requested. St. Louis will strive to ensure that an education appropriate to their needs is provided for students with special educational needs and will seek to:

All students with additional educational needs are supported through the use of ICT (the students have access to chrome books during SEN class) and any assistive technology being used by them. We aim to ensure that the school provides an inclusive and supportive environment for all our students and supports the acceptance of diversity and will take proactive steps to guard against unfair treatment as a consequence of disability or special need. Team Teaching is also an important teaching mechanism within the school and is used to support students with additional educational needs in order to provide learning support that promote inclusion and the enjoyment of learning for everyone.

Teaching and Learning in St. Louis is underpinned by active learning and teaching. All classes include various active pedagogic strategies including cooperative learning, building learning power, innovative assessment strategies and the use of ICT, including Chromebooks as an additional learning tool. Team Teaching is also an important teaching mechanism within the school and teachers regularly work collaboratively. Team teaching is used to support students with additional educational needs in order to promote inclusion and enjoyment of learning for everyone. Active learning opportunities facilitate the development of all our students' key skills and the habits of lifelong learning.

We recognise that all our students are entitled to an education appropriate to their needs including those who may be gifted and talented and we endeavour to facilitate all our students reaching their full potential by providing a level of challenge equal to each student's ability through differentiation, additional materials and an accelerated rate of learning.

The various categories of special educational needs, the definitions of these categories, and the criteria for the allocation of additional resources and the procedures for application are set by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and are as follows:

- Physical disability
- Hearing impairment
- Visual impairment
- Emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems
- Severe emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems •

Mild general learning disability

- Borderline general learning disability
- Specific learning disability
- Moderate general learning disability
- Severe or profound general learning disability
- Autism/autistic spectrum disorder

- Pupils with special educational needs arising from an assessed syndrome
- Specific speech and language disorder

Multiple disabilities Section 3:

Rationale of SEN Policy

Our SEN policy aims to outline our commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all our students. This commitment is underpinned by the ethos, aims, vision and culture of our School and our patrons Le Cheile and guided by relevant legislation.

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Equal Status Act (2000)
- The Education (Welfare) Act (2000)
- The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)
- The Freedom of Information Acts (1997 and 2003)
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
- The Disability Act (2005)

This policy is a reflection of our current practice in our School in relation to facilitating and promoting a whole school approach to special educational needs.

Aims and Objectives of our SEN Policy

- To facilitate the social, emotional and educational (including literacy and numeracy) and physical wellbeing of students with special educational needs
- To ensure that St. Louis is an inclusive learning environment that enables students with special educational needs to live a full life and to her full potential as a unique individual through access to an appropriate broad and balanced curriculum
- To enable students with special educational needs to function as independently as possible in society through the provision of such educational supports as are necessary to realise that potential
- To help students with special educational needs develop the skills they need to continue learning in adult life
- To ensure that parents/guardians are involved in decisions about their children's education.

Section 4: Special Educational Needs Team

The overall responsibility for the provision of education to all students, including students with special educational needs, lies with the Board of Management and under current legislation the Principal of the school has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the special educational needs of students are met. In order to facilitate the organisation and provision of education for students with special educational needs in St. Louis, we have identified both the internal and external SEN team members below.

St. Louis School's Internal SEN Team

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Special Educational Needs Coordinator
- Learning Support Teachers
- Mainstream Teachers
- Special Educational Needs Assistants (SNA)
- Students

St. Louis External SEN Team

- Board of Management
- Parents of the student
- External Agencies
- External Support Services
- The Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO- Ms. Aedemer Cooke)

The SEN team comprises of the SEN coordinator and a large team of mainstream teachers to carry out learning support classes. It is envisioned that our long term goal would be to have a small cohort of learning support teachers, which will further provide an organisational structure to enable teachers in specialist roles related to inclusion and SEN to collaborate with one another and with mainstream teachers, in an efficient and effective manner, for the benefit of the students in their target groups. At present, all members of staff support students with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms or through learning support periods.

Section 5:

Communication

All communication is done in a respectful, timely and confidential manner and follows best practice guidelines in relation to data protection and school policies.

Core SEN Team

The SEN core team (Ms. G. Finn and Ms. J Mallon) meet on a regular basis in order to ensure best practice in relation to the supports being provided to our students. These meetings can be formal or informal. In formal meetings, minutes are taken. There are also meetings with senior school management, meetings with external agencies, staff meetings, and in-service training.

SEN Timetable

At the beginning of each academic year a SEN Student timetable is compiled and the relevant periods circulated to appropriate teachers by the core SEN team and management. Feedback is given to all staff at regular intervals throughout the academic year outlining the student needs.

Permitting teachers to request restrictions on their availability to work during working hours 8.50-3.50 makes the completion of the timetable difficult and can undermine the quality of provision for the students. Therefore, management have requested that any requests for protected time should be brought to the attention of the School's Principal directly. The core SEN will focus on the needs of the students and the layout of their timetables when allocating SEN hours. All teachers can be asked to facilitate a learning support class at any period throughout the day regardless of the structure of individual's timetable. In the interest of fairness to all staff, no concessions by the core team can be implemented or any deviations from the school policy can occur.

Record Keeping

All SEN records and individual SEN student files are kept in a secure file in the learning support office. Best practice guidelines in relation to data protection are followed.

Parents & Guardians

Communication to parents is facilitated through our open day, our incoming first year assessment test day and information evenings, letters/phone calls/vsware texts to parents, student journal, parent-teacher meetings, meetings with SEN team.

External Agencies

Communication and meetings with external agencies e.g. NCSE, NEPS, Visiting Teacher Services, OT and Speech and Language therapists and social workers are organised and attended as appropriate by the team.

Section 6:

SEN Model of Organisation in St. Louis School

Identification Process & Screening

We encourage parents to meet with us to discuss their child's specific needs and our school's capacity to meet the child's needs. We request that all relevant documentation and information is forwarded to us. The SEN coordination and Enrolment Coordinator visit all feeder students to ensure that we can prepare to support all our incoming students. We facilitate the transition from primary school for students with additional educational needs through regular contact with their parents and meeting throughout the month of June and late August. As part of our transition programme and first year induction, we ensure that students with SEN are included and supported in their initial experiences in our school. Additionally, all students take the CAT4 exam as part of their entrance test and WRAT4 tests are administered on identified students throughout the month of September to gather additional evidence.

Assessment – monitoring, tracking

All students listed on our SEN register have a student support file which facilitates the tracking and monitoring of specific targets and progress including specific interventions, levels of support, assessments and referrals. In consultation with parents, students who have been identified as having learning needs are facilitated in a variety of ways, according to their needs including:

- Curricular differentiation
- Curricular reduction
- Team Teaching/Co-operative Teaching
- In-class support/Differentiation
- Inclusion of SNA in specific classes
- Small group support
- One to one support
- Organisation, life and social skills supports

- The use of assistive technology
- The use of Accelerated Reader Programme
- Paired Reading groups
- Use of structured literacy interventions – Alpha to Omega, SNIP literacy, Wow Word

L2LP programme

Where students are identified as having emerging needs, the SEN Co-ordinator will begin a process of informal assessment including observations from mainstream teachers, consultation with parents, meeting with student, SNA consultation/observation as well as formal assessment including review of entrance tests, review of in-house exams and reports, consultation with Guidance Counsellors and administration of relevant tests such as WRAT and/or CAT 4.

Following this profiling stage decisions are made as to appropriate support warranted as follows:

- No need for further action.
- Needs for monitoring /support in mainstream setting.
- Purposeful support either on a one to one basis or in a small group.

All information / data gathered is recorded in the Student Support file which is kept in their file. The final decision to engage with the L2LP programme in the two areas currently offered in the school (literacy and numeracy) is collaboratively made with parents, SEN team and senior management.

Models of SEN Support

The NEPS continuum of support is used as a framework to provide support to all students with SEN. The support provided is based on the nature and extent of their individual need and is reviewed annually. Here in St. Louis, we have a growth mind set and it is envisioned that students may not always require learning support and tailored interventions as they grow and develop over the years. However, we are aware that in certain cases, some student will require this level of intervention through their entire journey with us.

Learning support is offered and can encompass academic, social and emotional support through various modes of team teaching, in class support, 1:1 support,

small group support, differentiation, literacy and numeracy support, and subject specific support.

Timetabling

SEN timetable is scheduled after the mainstream timetable has been organised and issued to teachers. *Support for ALL* is a process of prevention, effective mainstream teaching and early identification. These systems are available to all students and effectively meet the needs of most students. *School Support for SOME* is an assessment and intervention process which is directed to some students, or groups of students who require some additional input. *School Support Plus- for a FEW* is generally characterised by more intensive and individualised supports such as SNA support, access to the L2LP programme and reduced timetables. This level of intervention is for students with complex and/or enduring needs and relatively few students will need this level of support.

Access to the Curriculum

All students are provided with the opportunity to access the mainstream curriculum in junior cycle and students' needs are supported with advice in relation to optional subjects. Where appropriate, L2LP can be facilitated to ensure that students are both challenged and rewarded at an appropriate level. Students exempt from the study of Irish can attend learning support during this time or EAL classes if appropriate. Some student will not require such support and as a result will sit at the back of their designated Irish class and work independently on their own material.

Access to learning support rooms

Room 30 and 31 are primarily used for learning support by the core team and the facilitation of the L2LP programme. Students and teachers who are working

on the latter will have priority use of this room as the relevant material to run the programme will be stored here (room 31). Learning support teachers are asked to locate an available space at the time of their lesson and make the SEN team aware of the room number. It is the responsibility of the learning support teacher to collect their student from the appropriate room at the commencement of a learning support class. Once a student is familiar and comfortable with this arrangement it is envisioned that the student will make their way independently to this room.

Examinations (in house assessment, SEC exams)

Applications will be made to the State Examinations Commission for RACE provision for students with SEN sitting the Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate. This SEN policy will be reviewed annually. School granted accommodations are made in conjunction with the SEN team and senior management. Subject teachers are asked not to make any direct recommendations to students about possible RACE accommodations. Instead, it is advisable that the subject teacher liaises with the SEN core team and they will then look into the appropriate testing regime in line with RACE criteria. Sample of students' written work will be requested by the team from the relevant teacher to assess the appropriate intervention that may be required.

Procedures for One to One Teaching

1. One-to-one teaching or small group teaching is often in the best interest of the child and may be facilitated for students if possible.
2. Every effort will be made to ensure that this teaching takes place in an open environment i.e. staff member and student will be visible through a glass panelled door and/or the door slightly ajar. Learning support teachers will be made aware of the school's child protection policy and aware of the relevant safe-guarding procedures.
3. A copy of one-to-one teaching timetables will be given to the Principal along with group times.
4. Work being carried out by SNA team will be carried out under the direction of the subject teacher and in an open environment or in a room with a glass panelled door.

Roles and Responsibilities of the SEN Team

The Special Educational Needs Team (and SEN Coordinator) in conjunction with the Principal:

- Oversees the day to day operation of our school's SEN policy, including formulation, implementation and review
 - Liaises with feeder schools, teachers & parents of incoming students
 - Supports our school's management team in terms of management and responsibility for provision of SEN within the school
 - Co-ordinates management and timetabling of the SEN team (learning support teachers/SNAs)
 - Co-ordinates and allocates duties for SNAs
 - Liaises with and advises colleagues in relation to SEN
 - Co-ordinates the formulation, implementation and review of student support files
 - Monitors and tracks students with SEN
 - Co-ordinates provision for students with SEN e.g. withdrawal of students for individual/group instruction, in class support etc.
 - Oversees the records/reports/register on students with SEN • liaises with parents/guardians of students with SEN
 - Contributes to the in-service/upskilling of staff as appropriate
 - Facilitates the identification of Irish and 3rd language exemptions
 - Co-ordinates the application for Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations (RACE)
 - Liaises with external agencies and support services as appropriate including:

Inclusion Support Service (Special Education Needs Support Service (SESS), National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS), Visiting Teachers Service); National Education Psychological Service (NEPS); National Council for Special

Education (NCSE); State Examinations Commission (SEC); Psychologists, Speech & language Therapists, Occupational Therapists; Dyslexia, Dyspraxia Associations; Autism/Asperger Support Ireland; National Council for the Blind of Ireland; National Council for the Deaf

These duties are reviewed regularly and may change to ensure the priority needs of the department are met.

Roles and Responsibilities of the SEN partnership team:

The SEN team consists of the Principal, Deputy Principal, SEN Co-ordinator, Year Heads, Learning Support teachers, the Guidance Counsellor and the mainstream teachers. The team also includes the SNA team as approved by the DES. The SEN Co-ordinator is also part of the Pastoral Care team in the school and works closely with the student support team and with Year Heads. The team is advised by the SENO and NEPS psychologist as well as other agencies and professionals involved with SEN students in the school. The specific roles and responsibilities of personnel are as described in the DES Inspectorate publication, Inclusion of Students with Special needs, Post-primary Guidelines (2007).