



## **Whole-School Inclusion Policy for Sancta Maria College**

### **1. Introduction**

This policy document aims to outline the form that additional educational support for students with special educational needs (SEN) takes in the school and the philosophy which underpins it. It is written in the context of the Education Act (1998) and takes cognisance of The Equal Status Act (2000), The Equality Act (2004), The Education Welfare Act (2000), The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003) and The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004). Two further publications have informed the content of this policy – “Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs – Post-Primary Guidelines” (Department of Education and Science [DES] Inspectorate: 2007) and “Exceptionally Able Students – Draft Guidelines for Teachers” (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA]: 2007).

The policy is the result of a consultative process involving staff, parents and Board of Management.

The document should be read in conjunction with the following policies: (1) Admissions, (2) Pastoral Care, (3) Anti-Bullying and (4) Guidance and Counselling.

### **2. Mission**

Sancta Maria College is a Catholic Secondary School founded by the Sisters of Mercy and is currently under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education – an Irish Schools Trust). Our aim is the holistic development of young women in a caring, Christian environment.

Our College strives to be a centre of academic excellence where each child is helped to achieve her full spiritual, physical and emotional potential.

We see ourselves as an inclusive community that is welcoming of all. We foster an atmosphere of learning that is holistic in approach and nurtures each individual student’s personal growth and development.

Our Learning Support Programme is a tangible sign of our commitment to be an inclusive learning community. It is based directly on the needs of our students and, therefore, must be reviewed regularly to meet needs that may change.

### **3. Definitions**

- (a) Students with special educational needs are those who are restricted from participating in, and benefiting 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. (EPSEN [Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs] Act 2004).
- (b) Exceptionally able students are those understood to require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for in the general cohort of students.

### **4. Access to Learning Support**

A student may be selected for Learning Support in our school in the following circumstances:

- A student who has had a psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support/Resource Teaching
- A student who has a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) or a General Learning Disability (GLD)
- A student identified during the entrance assessments
- A student identified by her teachers as having difficulty with one or more of their subjects
- A student considered to have emotional or behavioural difficulties
- A student with Traveller status
- A student with physical difficulties
- A student with English as an Additional Language (EAL) needs

While every effort is made to meet the needs of students, it must also be noted that this provision is dependent on the extent of the resources made available to the College by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

### **5. Roles**

**All of the following are responsible for managing the school response for students with Special Educational Needs:**

#### **(a) Board of Management**

- Oversees the development, implementation and review of a Special Needs Policy
- Arranges for a periodic review of the range of curriculum provision within the school to ensure that suitable programmes are on offer to all students
- Provides resources for the professional development of staff in supporting students with special educational needs
- Ensures adequate accommodation and resources
- Provides a secure facility for the storage of records
- Ensures that the rights of parents as prescribed in legislation are upheld in the school

#### **(b) Principal**

- Has responsibility for ensuring that the special educational needs of students are met
- Works with the Board, staff and parents/guardians in the development of a whole- school plan for Learning Support and Special Needs

- Ensures that mainstream teachers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the education of students with special needs
- Monitors implementation of learning programmes and selection of students for Learning Support
- Consults and liaises with outside bodies and agencies
- Provides for in-service training for staff
- Promotes the involvement of parents of students with special educational needs

**(c) Deputy Principal**

- Liaises with the Learning Support Teacher and the Resource Co-ordinator in the allocation of Special Needs Teachers/Resource Teachers /Learning Support Teachers/Special Needs Assistants to students with needs
- Makes applications to the appropriate bodies for resources in Special Needs, English as an Additional Language, etc.
- Is a member of the Care Team and attends weekly meetings of this team
- Co-ordinates the setting up of separate centres for State Examinations
- Recruits readers/superintendents locally
- Meets with the SEN Co-ordinator on a regular basis

**(d) Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator**

- Co-ordinates Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with special educational needs in consultation with parents, student, SEN team, Guidance Counsellor and teachers
- Co-ordinates the work of the SEN/LS teaching team devising schemes of work to address specific needs
- Studies the profiles of new 1<sup>st</sup> year students in liaison with the Learning Support Teacher and the Guidance Counsellor.
- Identifies special needs and Irish language exemptions
- Attends weekly Care Team meetings
- Liaises with Care Team for educational/psychological assessments with NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service) Psychologist; liaises with SENO (Special Educational Needs Organiser) and Deputy Principal re reports and organises feedback to staff on reports
- Devises, reviews and updates students' Individual Education Plans
- Develops timetable for Resource Teachers and students with special needs; and distributes copies to Year Heads, Deputy Principal and Principal
- Develops and co-ordinates timetable for Special Needs Assistants and students and distributes copies appropriately
- Manages the Special Needs Assistants in terms of their timetable, use of time, documenting, record-keeping, reporting, etc.
- Arranges a weekly meeting for the Special Needs Assistants for their weekly written reports
- Liaises with parents regarding students' needs
- Monitors student progress via teachers' and Special Needs Assistants' written reports
- Recommends students for applications for Reasonable Accommodations for Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate Examinations to the Care Team
- Prepares applications for resource hours

- Co-ordinates student record-keeping with Resource Teachers and Special Needs Assistants, including attendance records
- Liaises with outside support staff & agencies such as:
  - ❖ Duty Social Worker
  - ❖ Health Board
  - ❖ Physiotherapy Support Services
  - ❖ Speech Therapy Services
  - ❖ Hearing/Vision Testing Services
  - ❖ Counselling/Therapy Services, etc.
- Meets with Principal on a regular basis

**(e) Learning Support Teacher**

- Liaises with primary schools and gathers information about the learning needs of incoming students who have been in receipt of Learning Support
- Studies psychological reports and completed SEN questionnaires from enrolment documentation
- Advises the Deputy Principal – on foot of the analysis of this documentation – regarding the submission of applications to the NCSE when warranted
- Informs parents if their daughter needs Learning Support
- Meets and advises parents as required
- Facilitates communication with the general staff on Learning Support issues
- Supports and remediates the literacy and numeric needs of students
- Works with the SEN Co-ordinator and Resource Teachers
- Co-ordinates Reasonable Accommodations at examinations in consultation with the Guidance and Counselling Department
- Organises meetings with NEPS regarding new assessments and reviews of existing psychological assessments
- Is a member of the student Care Team and attends a weekly, timetabled meeting as part of that team

**(f) Resource Teacher**

- Works with the SEN co-ordinator and Learning Support Teachers
- May be involved in co-operative teaching in mainstream classes with Mainstream Teachers
- Works with students on a withdrawal basis for additional classes in particular subjects
- Liaises with the Guidance Counsellor and other staff members in relation to the selection and implementation of tests and other means of assessing students' achievements and progress
- Is involved in the review of the progress of individual students following the implementation of the Individual Education Plan
- Liaises and consults with Mainstream Teachers as required
- Devises schemes of work for their assigned SEN students

**(g) Guidance Counsellor**

- Liaises with primary schools and gathers information about the emotional, social, family and learning needs of students
- Administers diagnostic assessment tests to incoming First Year students
- Provides counselling in personal, educational and career development
- Provides career information and guidance
- Consults with Special Educational Needs team, staff and parents
- Makes referrals to other professionals and agencies
- Is a member of the Care Team and attends a weekly, timetabled meeting as part of that team

**(h) Subject Teacher**

- Has primary responsibility for the progress of all students in their class
- Collaborates with the SEN Co-ordinator and Learning Support Teacher in identifying pupils who may have General or Specific Learning Disabilities
- Attempts, as far as possible, to differentiate the curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of all pupils, e.g., setting objectives at appropriate levels, modifying presentations & questioning appropriately
- Provides learning activities and materials that will enable successful outcomes

**(i) Special Needs Assistant**

- Makes a valuable contribution to the capacity of the school to provide inclusive education for students with special educational needs. The duties of the Special Needs Assistant are assigned by the Principal acting on behalf of the Board of Management and are outlined in Circular SNA 12/05 (DES).
- Engages in assisting a student or a group of students in relation to a particular learning task – this should always take place in accordance with the directions of the teacher who has assigned the task
- Treats all matters relating to school business and their work in school as strictly confidential

**(j) Parents**

- Sancta Maria College recognises the rights of parents/guardians of students with special educational needs to be involved in, and consulted about, the programme of education available for their daughter.
- Parents are encouraged to actively communicate with the school if they observe any learning or related difficulties at home.
- Where screening, assessment and profiling are conducted, parents are consulted and their permission sought.
- When an Individual Education Plan is being developed, parents will be consulted and will receive a copy of the plan. This plan will be reviewed annually, and parents will receive a copy of the report.

**(k) Students:**

- We welcome the involvement of students with special educational needs in planning for their own learning.
- A student, for whom an IEP is being developed, is consulted as an essential part of the development process.
- Students are encouraged to contribute to the learning targets as set out in the IEP.

**6. Procedures for Identifying a Student with SEN:**

- (a) Parents may indicate on the student information form, upon enrolling in the College, that special needs were identified in primary school. The Learning Support Teacher consults with parents when necessary – prior to entry – to review psychological reports in preparation for completing applications for DES resource hours where appropriate.
- (b) The Guidance Counsellor and Learning Support Teacher consult with primary teachers when visiting feeder primary schools during the spring of the year of entry.
- (c) An analysis of standardised test results received from primary schools is undertaken.
- (d) Standardised tests are administered to all incoming First Year students in February, and the results of these tests may indicate a need for additional support or further assessment.
- (e) A Class Teacher, Tutor and/or Year Head can refer any student they are concerned about to the SEN Department. Referral forms are available in the staffroom. This allows the SEN team to consult with the Class Teachers, Tutors, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, etc. as necessary, to ascertain the nature of the SEN and to design a response strategy.
- (f) When a parent notifies the Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head/Tutor/Guidance Counsellor or Subject Teacher that a student is not benefiting from the regular education programme provided by the school, a process of formal and informal assessment is initiated by the SEN team.

**Informal assessment may involve all or some of the following:**

- Observations from Mainstream Teachers
- Consultations with parents
- Use of Student Journal
- Meeting with student

**Formal assessment may involve some or all of the following:**

- Review of entrance tests
  - Review of in-house examinations and reports
  - Behavioural record if appropriate
  - Consultation with the Guidance Counsellor
  - Referral to outside agencies
- (g) Following this profiling stage, decisions are made as to the appropriate support warranted. It may be decided that:
- There is no need for further action
  - There is a need for monitoring and support in a mainstream setting
  - Purposeful withdrawal is desirable

- Further investigation is required and parents will be advised in relation to assessments

## **7. When a student is identified with Special Educational Needs**

- (a) In a situation where a student is identified as needing additional support, an Individual Education Plan is drawn up in consultation with parents, staff and the student herself. Priority learning needs are identified, and a timeframe for the attainment of targets is included. Targets are set for each priority learning need, and strategies and resources required are identified. A date is set for the review of the IEP.
- (b) The format of this plan is listed in **Appendix A**.
- (c) A scheme of work is developed, and a review of progress with the student takes place once every term. This review may take into account the perspectives of both parents and staff.
- (d) All records pertaining to the student will be retained on the student file.

## **8. Organisation of Class Groups**

In First Year, a mixed-ability policy is in place. In Second and Third Year, classes are banded for Irish and Maths; in Third Year, classes are also banded for English with regular reviews taking place. Transition Year operates a mixed-ability policy, except in Irish where classes are divided into Higher and Ordinary Levels. The Senior Cycle also operates on a mixed-ability basis for all subjects, with the exceptions of Irish, English and Maths.

## **9. Organisation of Learning Support**

Currently, we have a mixed model of Learning Support in operation, i.e.

- Individual Withdrawal
- Small-Group Withdrawal
- Group Withdrawal
- Reduced Timetable
- Team Teaching

## **10. Other Issues**

### **(a) Withdrawals:**

The SEN Department may withdraw students from subjects in consultation with the respective teachers and with parents. In some cases, students with SEN may be on reduced timetables to facilitate their particular needs.

### **(b) Irish Language Exemptions:**

Irish language exemptions will only be granted when the criteria outlined in Circular M 10/94 are met. All SEN/LS students who have an Irish exemption in Junior Cycle will be offered as much support teaching at this time as our resources allow. This allocation may vary from year to year.

(c) Information:

In September, teachers receive details of all pupils with SEN/LS needs. The information includes:

- Category of disability
- Level of support being provided
- Potential areas of difficulty
- Potential provision at State Exams

Parental permission is sought in advance for the transfer of this information.

If a psychological assessment is available, a summary of the needs and recommendations is made available to all relevant staff. This information is only given with the permission of parents.

(d) House and Mock Examinations:

Every effort is made to offer Reasonable Accommodations to students in receipt of them for school examinations.

### **11. The Exceptionally Able Student**

Students who require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for in the general cohort of students are deemed to be exceptionally able.

Students may excel in various areas, and the school will do what it can as an inclusive learning community to support them and encourage the development of their special abilities.

### **12. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The monitoring and evaluation of the programme will be conducted on an ongoing basis throughout the year by the Principal, Deputy Principal, Special Education Needs Co-ordinator, Learning Support Teachers and Resource Teachers.

**This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on: Tuesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014.**

The Policy was then signed by:

Signed: John Shortt

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014

Signed: Gerardine Kennedy

(Principal)

Date: June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014