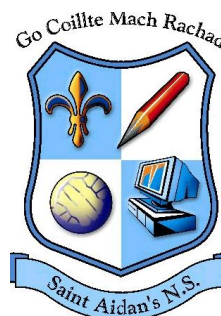


St. Aidan's National School, Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo.
Roll No. 19903 A

Scoil Aodáin, Coillte Mách, Co. Mhaigheo.

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Special Education Needs Policy

This Policy on SEN Provision in St. Aidan's NS, is an update on our last policy taking cognisance of directives contained in:

- the 1998 Education Act;
- the Learning-Support Guidelines (2000);
- the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004;
- Circular 02/05
- The most recent Department of Education and Skill Circular - Circular 13/17

The Policy was discussed and further developed by the teaching staff of St. Aidan's NS on 7/02/2018 and further reviewed by ISM and SET team in May 2021.

The Policy was discussed, accepted and ratified by the Board of Management of St. Aidan's NS on 25th May 2021.

Introduction

St. Aidan's N.S. is a mixed school catering for pupils from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. The school at present has 4 full-time Special Education Posts and one part-time and also has 5 SNAs.

Our School Profile

The table under provides the breakdown for our school of the 2019/2020 allocation

SRN	Breakdown in Hours	As set out in DES Circular
Baseline	19.21	Section 6 and Appendix 1
Complex Needs	57.38	Section 7.1
Standardised Test (English)	10.15	Section 7.2
Standardised Test (Mathematics)	10.34	Section 7.2
Social Context	3.95	Section 7.3
Gender	3.71	Section 7.4
Total (Rounded)	102.5	Section 8 and Appendix 1

Guiding Principles

We hope that all children in our care will complete the primary school cycle with levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy which are in line with the pupil's level of ability. Our Special Education Programme is based on the following principles:

- Quality of teaching
- Effective whole school policies
- Parental involvement
- Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need
- Implementation of a staged approach to support provision at Class Support/School Support/School Support Plus
- Provision of the Model of intervention appropriate for the pupil and the difficulty they are experiencing
 - ❖ **Withdrawal Model**
 - 1:1 (when pupil needs do not match to form a small group)
 - Small group interventions
 - ❖ **In-Class Support Model**
 - Station Teaching/ Team Teaching/ Peer Tutoring
- Collaboration between Teachers
- Maintenance of Support Plans by Class Teachers at Class Support/School Support/School Support Plus
- Thorough Assessment procedures
- Regular contact with SEN pupils
- Manageable caseloads/timetables
- Prevention of failure through early intervention
- Provision of intensive early intervention
- Support from Outside Agencies
- Continuing Professional Development

Aims of SEN Support

- To support the inclusion of SEN pupils in Primary Schools
- To ensure that the Staged Approach/NEPS Continuum of Support is implemented
- To provide supplementary teaching and additional support in English and/or Mathematics
- To enable SEN pupils to participate in the full curriculum
- To encourage differentiation in the classroom
- To develop positive self esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in pupils
- To support attainment and behavioural, social and emotional functioning
- To enable the pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners
- To promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole-school policies on learning support for pupils
- To involve parents in supporting their children through effective parent - support programmes
- To establish early intervention programmes designed to enhance learning and to prevent/reduce difficulties in learning
- To guard the self-esteem and self-image of the learner

Roles and Responsibilities.

The role of supporting learning is a collaborative responsibility shared by all of the

school community:- The Board of Management; Principal Teacher; Class Teachers; Support Teachers; Special Class Teachers; SNAs; Parents; Pupils and External Bodies & Agencies. It is important that everyone contributes to the implementation of our school plan on SEN Provision.

Role of the Board of Management.

The Board of Management shall:

- Oversee the development, implementation and review of the SEN policy.
- Ensure that satisfactory classroom accommodation is provided for the Support Teachers.
- Ensure that teaching resources are provided for the Support Teachers.
- Provide adequate funds for the purchase of SEN materials.
- Provide secure facilities for the storage of records relating to pupils in receipt of SEN.

Role of the Principal Teacher.

- Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policies on special needs in co-operation with the Support Teachers.
- Work with teachers and Parents in the development of the school plan on learning-support and special needs.
- Monitor the implementation of the school plan on SEN and special needs on an ongoing basis
- Monitor the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with very low achievement.
- Oversee the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need.
- Keep teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed for initial referrals.
- Help teachers to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of learning-support.
- Encourage and facilitate staff members to attend CPD courses.
- Liaise regularly with the Support Teachers
- Arrange classroom accommodation for Support Teachers.
- Arrange for the provision of SEN funding and resources.
- Organise and co-ordinate the construction of Support Plans. Ensure that individualised planning takes place.
- Ensure that pupils who have been allocated SEN provision receive it.
- Organise the funding and provision of appropriate assessment tests.
- Complete application forms for outside agencies such as NCSE; NEPS; CAMHS etc...
- Assume direct responsibility for co-ordinating SEN and special needs services.
- Maintain a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and / or special educational services.
- Co-ordinate the caseloads / work schedules of the Support Teachers.
- Oversee and organise the implementation of a tracking system at whole-school level to monitor the progress of children with learning difficulties.
- Advise Parents on procedures for availing of special needs services.
- Liaise with external agencies such as psychological services to arrange assessments and special

provision for pupils with special needs.

- Co-ordinate and organise Special Classes and oversee the provision available therein.
- Co-ordinate and organise SNAs' work and timetabling.
- The 2017 Guidelines add the following:
 - *"The Learning Support Guidelines (2000, p.39) outlined the principal teacher's overall responsibility for the education of children with special educational needs. Under the new allocation model the principal's leadership role is central and includes the following:*
 - *Developing inclusive whole-school policies and monitoring their implementation*
 - *Assigning staff strategically to teaching roles, including special education roles*
 - *Co-ordinating teachers' work to ensure continuity of provision for all pupils*
 - *Ensure that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, pupils and external professionals / agencies*
 - *Ensuring that effective systems are implemented to identify pupils' needs and that progress is monitored methodically*
 - *Facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to education of pupils with special educational needs, and ensure that all school staff (class teachers, special education teachers and special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area.*
 - *Depending on the school's size and context, some of these actions will be delegated to teams or other members of staff while the principal retains overall responsibility for the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs" (p. 23).*

The Deputy Principal, Della Macken holds the position of Special Needs Co-ordinator and currently undertakes the following duties, delegated to her by the Principal

Policy:

- Together with the principal takes responsibility for formulating and updating the school's SEN policy.
- Collaborates with the Principal Teacher and meets with her regularly to discuss issues relating to the development and implementation of the school plan on SEN and to the provision of SEN.

Selection:

- Monitoring the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching with the Principal, ensuring that support is focused on the pupils with very low achievement.
- Identifying the level of support that is needed to meet the pupil's needs, in conjunction with the Principal, Class Teacher and Parents.
- Assisting the Principal Teacher to co-ordinate the caseloads / work schedules of the Support Teachers, when requested.

Assessment

- Overseeing the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with

the support they need.

- Co-ordinating the administration by Class Teachers of a whole-school screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and / or learning difficulties in English and Mathematics
- Consulting with Class Teachers on the identification of pupils who may need diagnostic assessment, taking into account:
 - the pupils' scores on an appropriate standardised screening measure
 - agreed criteria for identifying pupils
 - teachers' own views of the pupils' difficulties and needs
 - Support Teacher caseload.
- Co-ordinating comprehensive diagnostic assessment for each pupil who has been identified as experiencing low achievement and / or learning difficulties.
- Keeping teachers informed about external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed for initial referrals, when requested. Researching current assessments for primary schools.
- Maintaining assessment tests.
- Ordering standardised assessment scripts each year.
- Distributing standardised assessment scripts to Class Teachers each year.
- Analyzing and maintaining the results of standardised assessments each year along with the Principal Teacher.
- Advising Class Teachers about observation checklists and screening assessments in September each year when requested.

Support Plans:

- Advising the Principal on the construction of Support Plans.
- Advising the Principal on current individualised planning best practice, when requested.
- Advising Class teachers and Support Teachers about Support Plans, when requested.

Co-ordination Activities:

- Maintaining a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching at each stage of support - Classroom Support / School Support / School Support Plus.
- Advising Parents on procedures for availing of special needs services, when requested.
- Advising Class Teachers on procedures for availing of special needs services, when requested.
- Liaising with external agencies such as psychological services to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs
- Supporting the Principal Teacher to implement a tracking system at whole-school level to monitor the progress of children with learning difficulties.
- Advising the Principal Teacher about pupils who have been allocated SEN provision, when requested.
- Completing application forms for outside agencies such as NCSE; NEPS; CAMHS etc..., in collaboration with Class Teachers and the Principal Teacher, as required.
- Advising on "*effective timetabling practices that ensures continuity*" (Circular 13/17), when requested.
- Advising on Transition, when requested.

Role of the Class Teacher.

- The Class Teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in her/his class, including those selected for supplementary teaching.

This can be achieved by:

- Grouping pupils for instruction
- Providing lower-achieving pupils with strategies for reading, spelling and problem solving
- Adapting learning materials for lower-achieving pupils and higher achieving pupils (through differentiation)
- Liaising closely with their Parents

"Meaningful inclusion implies that all pupils are taught in stimulating and supportive classroom environments where they are respected and valued... classroom teachers should ensure that they plan their lessons carefully to address the diverse needs within the classroom... adapt their teaching approaches for some pupils whose individual progress, application, motivation, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers are causes for concern" (2017 Guidelines: p.12).

"Every pupil needs to be taught a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate to his/her developmental level. Pupils' levels of interest, attention, concentration and persistence should be gradually developed, extended and rewarded, using appropriate teaching strategies" (2017 Guidelines: p.13).

- To cater for the range of learning needs in any class, mainstream class teachers will regularly need to differentiate their lessons. This can be achieved by:
 - Varying the level, structure, mode of instruction and pace of lessons to meet individual needs
 - Adapting lessons to take account of pupils' interests
 - Matching tasks to pupils' abilities and needs
 - Adapting and utilising resources, including the use of technology
 - Aspiring towards suitably challenging learning outcomes and assessing accordingly" (2017 Guidelines: p.13).

"Teachers can make lessons accessible to a broad range of pupils through the use of a variety of appropriate teaching approaches and methodologies, including active learning, small-group tuition, individual teaching, and scaffolded instruction. This may also require environmental adaptations to promote curricular access" (2017 Guidelines: p.13).

- With regard to teaching pupils with low achievement, the following general approaches and methods are recommended:
 - Modifying presentation and questioning techniques to maximise the involvement of pupils with low achievement in class activities
 - Placing an emphasis on oral language development across the curriculum
 - Providing pupils with extra tutoring in the key basic skills of literacy and numeracy
 - Setting learning targets at an appropriate level
 - 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, for particular attention in subsequent lessons
 - Setting up 'buddy systems' in class (high achievers collaboratively working with low achievers).

Identification of Learning Difficulties:

- The Class Teacher plays an important role in the initial identification of pupils who may have general or specific learning disabilities.
- In supporting the development and implementation of the school SEN Policy, the Class Teacher will administer appropriate screening measures, and discuss the outcomes with the Support Teacher(s).
- The Class Teacher will liaise closely with Parents and elicit relevant information from them regarding e.g. hearing / vision checks.

Classroom Support / Stage 1:

- Circular 02/05 demands the implementation of a Staged Approach (Appendix 1) for the provision of additional support, as does the NEPS Continuum of Support (Appendix 2).
- Stage 1 of the Staged Approach and NEPS' Classroom Support requires Class Teachers to support their pupils' learning, in the first instance.
- Stage 1 / Classroom Support will continue when School Support / School Support Plus is being phased out or discontinued, to meet the pupil's changing needs.

Support Plans:

- The Staged Approach requires Class Teachers to construct a simple, individual plan of support, to implement the plan and review its success regularly, before referring the child for Stage 2 interventions. The Class Teacher will open a Support Plan for the pupil at Stage 1 / Classroom Support level of interventions, including targets, interventions and progress.
- Log actions in the Support Plan.
- For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching at School Support / School Support Plus, the Class Teacher will collaborate with the Support Teacher in the development of a Support Plan by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve those targets.
- For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, the Class Teacher will adjust the class programme in line with the agreed learning targets and activities in the pupil's Support Plan and maintain a record of the pupil's progress towards achieving those learning targets.
- A key role of successful support is a high level of consultation and co-operation between the Class Teacher and the Support Teacher. Central to this consultation is the development, implementation and review of Support Plans. This consultation will be achieved through formal timetabling at least once per instructional term, and through informal consultation as the need arises.

Communicating with Parents:

- It is accepted practice for Class Teachers to consult with the Parents of all pupils in the class from time to time. However, for Parents of pupils who are in receipt of supplementary teaching, additional time should be devoted to consultation and collaborative planning.
- In the case of each pupil who has been identified as experiencing low achievement and / or a learning difficulty following administration of an appropriate screening measure, the Class Teacher should:
 - Make Parents aware of concerns about their child's progress.
 - Outline the support that is available to pupils who experience low achievement and / or learning difficulties (Classroom Support / School Support or School Support Plus).
 - Inform Parents that a meeting with the Support Teacher(s) and / or the Class Teacher will follow diagnostic assessments.
 - Attend, if possible, the meeting between the pupil's Parents and the Support Teacher(s).

-
- Collaborate with Parents and Support Teachers on the formation of a Support Plan.
- Indicate to Parents how the pupil's class programme will be modified in order to achieve the agreed learning targets in the pupil's Support Plan.
- Parental permissions for school-based tests / assessments is sought when the child enrolls in our school and is retained by the Class Teacher in the pupils' files in the classroom.

Role of the Special Educational Teachers

The Special Education Teacher's activities should include, where possible:

- Providing supplementary teaching commensurate with the child's particular and individual needs.
- Researching the pupil's learning difficulty / SEN, to become *au fait* with this impediment to learning.
- Being "*familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and to meet a variety of needs*" (2017 Guidelines p.13).
- Implementing suitable recommendations from outside agencies, wherever possible, and liaise with outside agencies pertinent to the children on their caseload.
- Developing a Support Plan for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching, in consultation with Class Teachers and Parents. "*Special education teachers, in consultation with class teachers, should plan their interventions carefully to address pupils' priority learning needs and to achieve the targets identified in the relevant Continuum of Support plan*" (2017 Guidelines p.14).
- Maintaining a Forward Planner and Progress Record, or equivalent, for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of support.
- Maintaining a Forward Planner and Progress Record (together with the Class Teacher) for In-Class support.
- Providing supplementary teaching in English and / or Mathematics to pupils who experience low achievement and / or learning difficulties at School Support / School Support Plus (as per Selection Criteria).
- Delivering intensive early intervention programmes, caseload and selection criteria permitting.
- Assisting the implementation of whole-school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching.
- Contributing to the development of policy on SEN at the whole school level
- Providing advice to the Class Teacher (if requested) about pupils who are experiencing learning difficulties in such areas as:
 - Individual pupil assessment
 - Programme planning
 - Curriculum differentiation
 - Approaches to language development
 - Approaches to reading
 - Approaches to spelling
 - Approaches to writing
 - Approaches to Mathematics
 - Behaviour difficulties
- Meeting with Class Teachers of each pupil who is in receipt of School Support / School Support Plus, to discuss targets and ways in which attainment of the targets can be supported throughout the school day.
- Meeting with Parents of each pupil who is in receipt of support, if possible, to discuss targets and ways in which attainment of the targets can be supported at home.

- Meeting with Parents of each pupil who is in receipt of support at the end of each instructional term, if possible:
 - To review the pupil's attainment of agreed targets
 - To discuss the next instructional term
 - To revise the pupil's Support Plan.
- Contributing at the school level to decision making regarding the purchase of learning resources, books and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms and in the Support Teacher's room.
- Liaising with external agencies such as speech and language therapists etc...
- Implementing school policies on preventing learning difficulties, screening pupils for learning difficulties, interpreting the outcomes of diagnostic assessments and providing supplementary teaching, where it is deemed necessary.
- In addition to providing supplementary teaching to pupils, the Support Teacher is involved in administering a range of formal and informal assessments and in maintaining records of the outcomes of those assessments. The Support Teachers shall:
 - Conduct an initial diagnostic assessment of each pupil who has been identified as having low achievement and/or a learning difficulty, based on results of an appropriate screening measure and record the findings of the assessment in the pupil's Support Plan.
 - Monitor the ongoing progress of each pupil in receipt of supplementary teaching in relation to the attainment of agreed learning targets and short-term objectives that arise from them, and record the observations in the Forward Planner and Progress Record, or equivalent.
 - Review the progress of each pupil at the end of an instructional term and record it on the pupil's Support Plan.
 - Log actions in the Support Plan.
- *"Teaching approaches will include a combination of team-teaching initiatives, co-operative teaching, early intervention and small group or individual support. Depending on the learning needs identified, a pupil with special educational needs may be supported at classroom level, or through mainstream classroom placement with additional teaching delivered through in-class or withdrawal support models"* (2017 Guidelines: p. 13).
- *"It is also beneficial for teachers to become involved in local professional networks (within the school itself and with other schools) where good special educational needs practice and disability awareness can be shared and promoted"* (2017 Guidelines: p. 27).

Role of the Special Needs Assistants (SNA's)

The purpose of the SNA scheme is to provide for the significant additional care needs, which some pupils with special educational needs may have.

Primary Care Needs SNA Tasks:

These may include:

- Assistance with feeding: Where a pupil with special needs requires adult assistance and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time.
- Administration of medicine: Where a pupil requires adult assistance to administer medicine and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time.
- Assistance with toileting and general hygiene: Where a child with special needs cannot independently self-toilet, and until such time as they are able to do so.
- Assistance with mobility and orientation: On an ongoing basis including assisting a pupil or pupils to access the school, the classroom, with accessing school transport (where provided, school Bus

Escorts should, in the first instance, assist a pupil to access school transport), or to help a pupil to avoid hazards in or surrounding the school. (Every effort must be made by the school to provide opportunities for independence e.g. the removal of hazards).

- Assisting teachers to provide supervision in the class, playground and school grounds: At recreation, assembly, and dispersal times including assistance with arriving and departing from school for pupils with special needs where the school has made a robust case that existing teaching resources cannot facilitate such supervision.
- Non-nursing care needs associated with specific medical conditions: Such as frequent epileptic seizures or for pupils who have fragile health.
- Care needs requiring frequent interventions including withdrawal of a pupil from a classroom when essential: This may be for safety or personal care reasons, or where a pupil may be required to leave the class for medical reasons or due to distress on a frequent basis.
- Assistance with moving and lifting of pupils, operation of hoists and equipment.
- Assistance with severe communication difficulties including enabling curriculum access for pupils with physical disabilities or sensory needs and those with significant, and identified social and emotional difficulties. Under the direction of the teacher, this might include assistance with assistive technology equipment, typing or handwriting, supporting transition, assisting with supervision at recreation, dispersal times etc...

The tasks noted above are the primary care support tasks for which access to SNA support is provided.

Secondary Care Associated Tasks (SNA Tasks):

The following tasks are the type of secondary care associated tasks which SNAs will often perform, but only once they have been allocated on the basis of the primary care support tasks listed above. The indicative list of secondary associated tasks listed below is not definitive and is reflective of the tasks detailed in Circulars 08/02 and 71/2011.

The associated support tasks which may be carried out include:

- Preparation and tidying of workspaces and classrooms or assisting a pupil who is not physically able to perform such tasks to prepare and tidy a workspace, to present materials, to display work, or to transition from one lesson activity to another. To assist with cleaning of materials.
- Assistance with the development of Personal Pupil Plans for pupils with Special Educational Needs, with a particular focus on developing a care plan to meet the care needs of the pupil concerned and the review of such plans.
- Assist Teachers and / or Principal in maintaining a journal and care monitoring system for pupils including details of attendance and care needs. Assist in preparation of school files and materials relating to care and assistance required in class by students with special needs.
- Planning for activities and classes where there may be additional care requirements associated with particular activities, liaising with Class Teachers and other Teachers such as the Resource Teacher and School Principal, attending meetings with Parents, SENO, NEPS Psychologists, or school staff meetings with the agreement and guidance of Class Teacher/Principal.
- Assistance with enabling a pupil to access therapy or psycho-educational programmes such as anger management or social skills classes, under the direction of qualified personnel¹, including Class Teachers or support teachers.

- Assistance to attend or participate in out of school activities: walks, or visits, where such assistance cannot be provided by teaching staff.
(See Appendix 3 Personal Pupil Plan (PPP))

Role of Parents

Parents can support the work of the school in supporting their child by:

- Providing a home environment in which there are opportunities for adults and children to participate together in language, literacy and mathematical activities in the early years before formal schooling begins.
- Supporting the work of the school by participating with their child in such activities as:
 - Book sharing / reading stories
 - Storytelling
 - Paired reading (listening to and giving supportive feedback on oral reading)
 - Discussions about school and other activities to build vocabulary and thinking skills
 - Writing lists and short accounts about children's experiences
 - Counting and measuring and other activities involving number
 - Visits to the zoo, museum, library etc... to broaden the range of their child's experiences
 - Using Information and Communications Technology (ICT), where available, to support learning in English and / or Mathematics
- Talking positively about school and school work.
- Availing of real-life situations to discuss the importance of language, literacy and mathematics.
- Modelling involvement in language, literacy and mathematical activities at home by engaging in and talking about these activities.
- Working on agreed Targets at home.
- Parents should keep the Class Teacher informed of the progress that they observe in their child's learning. They should also let the school know of any learning difficulties that they observe in their child at home. If, following diagnostic assessment, the child
 - has been identified as requiring supplementary teaching, the Parents should attend a meeting with the Support Teacher to discuss:
 - The results of the assessment
 - The learning targets in the child's Support Plan
 - The ways in which attainment of the targets can be supported at home.
- Where a child is in receipt of supplementary teaching from the Special Education Teacher, the Parents should:
 - Discuss their child's progress with the Support Teacher at the end of each instructional term, and, in cases where supplementary teaching is to be continued, discuss the revised learning targets and activities in their child's Support Plan.
 - At the discontinuation of supplementary teaching, discuss with their child's teachers how the child's future learning needs can continue to be met at school and at home.

Role of Pupils.

Pupils who are in receipt of supplementary teaching should, as appropriate:

- Outline his / her interests, aspirations, strengths.
- Contribute to the evaluation of their progress by participating in

- appropriate assessment activities, including self-assessment.
- Contribute to the Support Plan.
- Become familiar with the medium and short-term learning targets that have been set for them and they should be given the opportunity to contribute to the setting of such targets.
- Contribute to the selection of texts and other learning materials that are relevant to the attainment of their learning targets.
- Develop 'ownership' of the skills and strategies that are taught during supplementary teaching and learn to apply these learning strategies and skills to improve their own learning.

Role of External Bodies and Agencies.

"Support and guidance is available to teachers from external professionals such as NEPS Psychologists, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), the NCSE Support Service, the Inspectorate, and allied health professionals. It is important that schools have established procedures / protocols for liaising with these services and bodies in order to optimise the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs at the individual, group or whole-school level. This is especially important for those pupils with more significant and enduring needs who benefit from a multi-disciplinary approach to identification of need and the development of interventions.

The needs of many pupils span both health and education services. Health services (HSE and HSE-funded services) will continue to play an important role in early identification, assessment and diagnosis, intervention and review for pupils with special educational needs. It is important that schools are familiar with the range of health services in their locality, including referral pathways. Co-ordination is enhanced when schools liaise with and contribute to health-led assessment and delivery of interventions and when they facilitate meetings between parents and various support services. Schools should endeavour to incorporate relevant recommendations from health professionals in developing support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support" (2017 Guidelines: p. 25).

Prevention and Early Intervention.

Prevention / early intervention is a cornerstone of supporting learning.

Prevention Strategies.

Our strategies for preventing learning difficulties include:

- The development of agreed approaches to the teaching of English and Mathematics in order to ensure progression and continuity from class to class. (See Plean Scoile for English and for Mathematics).
- Careful development of phonological awareness and rhyming skills in the classroom, before the introduction of formal reading of words and books.
- The use of concrete materials at every opportunity.
- Implementation of whole school parental involvement programmes e.g. developing children's oral language skills; shared reading at home; developing early mathematical skills etc...
- Ongoing structured observation and assessment of the language, literacy and numeracy skills of pupils in the infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties
- Close collaboration and consultation between the Infant Teachers and the Support Teachers.
- Thorough Assessment procedures throughout the school

- Provision of additional support in language development / early literacy / early mathematical skills to pupils who need it

Early Intervention Programmes.

- Early intervention is a vital component of the NEPS Continuum of Support model.
- Early intervention programmes may be provided by the Class Teacher and / or by the Support Teacher, in accordance with the Staged Approach (Appendix 1) and the NEPS Continuum.
- Close collaboration and consultation between the Class Teachers and the Support Teachers, should identify pupils who may be in need of early intervention. Teacher observation and professional opinion will be given due consideration in the selection of pupils for early intervention programmes at Classroom Support / School Support level.
- Intensive early intervention programmes in the early primary classes can be an effective response to meeting the needs of children with low achievement. Such programmes will:
 - Be set within a specific time frame (13-20 weeks)
 - Be based on a shared expectation of success by everyone involved
 - Involve small group teaching or one-to-one teaching where small group teaching has not been effective / difficulties are significant
 - Include a strong focus on oral language, laying the foundation for meaningful reading activities and further development of language and comprehension skills
 - Emphasise the development of phonemic awareness
 - Develop phonic skills, once phonological awareness has been developed well
 - Develop word identification skills
 - Engage the pupils in frequent supervised oral and silent reading of texts at appropriate levels of difficulty and monitor their comprehension
 - Stress the interconnected nature of listening, speaking, reading and writing
 - Focus on language development in mathematics, and in the development of mathematical procedures and concepts.
- Programmes such as *"the Incredible Years - Teacher Classroom Management programme as a means of preventing the emergence of behavioural difficulties; FRIENDS for Life as a means of preventing anxiety and building resilience, or similar evidence-based programmes"* (2017 Guidelines, p.15).
- *"The use of early-intervention and prevention programmes helps mitigate the development of learning, social and emotional difficulties. A Balanced Approach to Literacy Development is an example of a resource for early-intervention and prevention of literacy difficulties"* (2017 Guidelines, p.14-15).
- *"the Department's support services offer a wide range of programmes and resource materials related to the social, emotional and behavioural needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. These programmes cover such issues as bullying, transition and behaviour management. A sample of programmes currently available includes: Anti-Bullying Support Materials; Transition from Primary to Post-Primary; Challenging Behaviour, Social Skills and Pupils with Special Educational Needs"* (2017 Guidelines, p.15).

Policy regarding Permissions; Screening; Assessment; Caseload; Selection; Allocating Additional Teaching Supports; Time Management and Review.

Parental Permissions:

- Written parental permissions for children to receive support (School support and School Support Plus) are given on the school enrolment form on school entry .

- Written parental permissions for school-based assessments are given by parents on school entry.
- **Initial Screening:** Class Teachers will carry out initial screening tests and standardised assessments. The Support Teachers will administer further screening tests, if deemed necessary.
- **Diagnostic Assessment:** The Support Teacher will discuss each class's recorded results with the Class Teacher, and carry out further screening tests and/or diagnostic assessments where it is deemed necessary. The results of these tests will inform the caseload selection process. The Principal Teacher and post holder will be kept informed at all times during this process.
- **Caseload Decisions:** Large caseloads have led to a dilution of SEN support provision, and this is to be avoided, as is the inclusion of average-achieving pupils on the Support Teachers caseload. The Staged Approach (Appendix 1), together with current guidelines (2017), and DES Circulars will inform all decision-making regarding the Support Teachers' caseloads.

Selection Criteria:

Selection Criteria for Providing Pupils with Additional Teaching Support:

Circular 13/2017 states - "Pupils under the new allocation model will be identified by schools for additional teaching support in accordance with the Continuum of Support Guidelines, and the Guidelines which accompany this Circular" (p. 13).

Pages 15 and 16 of the Circular go into the following detail -

"The Guidelines which accompany this circular set out the manner in which schools should identify pupils for additional teaching support in schools. In summary, in identifying pupils for support, schools should take into account the following:

- Standardised tests can be used to screen and identify pupils' performance in reading and mathematics. Those pupils performing below the 10th percentile should be prioritised for support in literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils who were previously in receipt of supplementary teaching from a resource or learning support teacher and who continue to experience significant learning difficulties.
- Pupils who are identified as having significant needs through a process of ongoing assessment and intervention as set out in the Continuum of Support Process (DES, 2010). This will be evidenced through school-based assessment of attainment, and behavioural, social and emotional functioning and ongoing monitoring of learning outcomes. Schools should also take into account needs set out in professional reports, where available.
- Pupils with mild or transient educational needs including those associated with speech and language difficulties, social or emotional problems, or co-ordination or attention control difficulties. Pupils who have specific learning disabilities.
- Pupils with significant Special Educational Needs. For example, pupils with significant learning, behavioural, emotional, physical and sensory needs. These pupils need additional teaching support because they require highly individualised and differentiated learning programmes that are tailored to their needs.
- Schools should also carefully consider the needs of other pupils who may present with a range of learning whose interaction may present a significant barrier to the pupils' learning and ability to access the curriculum.
- Pupils who have additional literacy or language learning needs including those pupils who need additional English Additional language Support.

The intensity of additional support that is provided for pupils with low achievement and pupils with special educational needs should be based on their needs and should be provided differentially

through the continuum of support process" (pages 15 and 16).

Support may be provided to pupils at Classroom Support / School Support / School Support Plus level of the NEPS' Continuum of Support Process (DES, 2010).

1. Class Teacher (NEPS' Classroom Support):

Pupils deemed to need additional support with their learning (literacy & numeracy) and / or specific needs (oral language, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development and application to learning) will be supported in the classroom by the Class Teacher.

2. Support Teacher (NEPS' School Support and School Support Plus):

The Support Teacher may provide additional support for the following pupils, through withdrawal (1:1 or in a small group) or in-class support (e.g. station teaching / team teaching / in-class support / peer tutoring), depending on the child's needs.

The following selection criteria encompasses current DES Circulars, Guidelines and general good practice. The school will select pupils in accordance with these criteria, starting at point (1) and continuing on through the selection criteria until caseloads / timetables are full.

"Those with the highest level of need should have the greatest level of support" (2017 Guidelines: p. 19).

Hierarchy of criteria for support

The following selection criteria encompass current DES Circulars, Guidelines and general good practice. The school will select pupils in accordance with these criteria, starting at point (1) and continuing on through the selection criteria until caseloads / timetables are full.

"Those with the highest level of need should have the greatest level of support" (2017 Guidelines: p. 19).

1. Pupils diagnosed as having significant and enduring Complex Needs.
2. Pupils scoring at/below the 12th percentile on standardised assessments in literacy.
3. Pupils scoring at/below the 12th percentile on standardised assessments in Mathematics.
4. Pupils experiencing trauma arising from an accident, familial trauma and illness,
5. Pupils experiencing serious difficulties with communication / social interaction / behaviour / emotional development / application to learning, despite interventions made by the Class Teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support. The class teacher will have opened a Support Plan and recorded the interventions in it
6. Early intervention in literacy - Infant class pupils who continue to experience difficulties in early literacy skills, despite interventions made by the Class Teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support. The class teacher will have opened a Support Plan and recorded the interventions in it.
7. Early intervention in Mathematics - Infant class pupils who continue to experience difficulties in early numeracy skills, despite interventions made by the Class Teacher at Classroom Support
8. Pupils who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) i.e. (a) pupils who arrive to our school without any English
9. Pupils scoring at or below STEN 4 (30th percentile) on standardised assessments in literacy, who continue to experience difficulty, despite interventions made by the Class Teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support. The class teacher will have opened a Support Plan and recorded the interventions in it.
10. Pupils scoring at or below STEN 4 (30th percentile) on standardised assessments in mathematics, who continue to experience difficulty, despite interventions made by the

Class Teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support.

The class teacher will have opened a Support Plan and recorded the interventions in it.

11. Pupils who have lived in Ireland less than two years, and whose English needs further support.
12. Transition to Post-Primary School (Appendix 4).
13. Gifted Pupils (those scoring above the 95th%ile in both English and Mathematics on Standardised Assessments and / or have been diagnosed by a NEPS Educational Psychologist as having a "superior IQ"). Interventions will be made in the first instance by the Class Teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support. The class teacher will have opened a Support Plan and recorded the interventions in it.

Allocating Additional Teaching Supports:

The 6 Steps from Circular 02/05.

- (1) **Step 1 Circular 02/05, p. 7.** A list of every pupil in the school, who has been highlighted as being in need of support, will be compiled.
- (2) **Step 2 Circular 02/05, p. 7.** This list will be examined in consultation with Circular 02/05, and each child will be allocated support, as appropriate, under the terms of the Staged Approach.
- (3) **Step 3 Circular 02/05, p. 7.** A list of members of the teaching staff will be compiled.
- (4) **Step 4 Circular 02/05, p. 8.** A member of staff will be allocated to support the learning of each pupil identified, taking into account: the Staged Approach; the needs of the pupils; the expertise and experience of the teacher; and practical considerations.
- (5) **Step 5 Circular 02/05, p. 8.** Pupils with similar needs may be grouped for support.
- (6) **Step 6 Circular 02/05, p. 8.** A tracking and recording system will be established. All teachers will actively monitor the progress of their pupils.

The 3 Steps from the 2017 Guidelines are similar:

Step 1: Identify Needs - "*The Continuum of Support is a problem-solving model of assessment and intervention that enables schools to gather and analyse data*" (2017 Guidelines: p.6).

*"Identification of educational needs is central to the new model. Using the Continuum of Support framework, schools can identify pupils' educational needs, to include academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. The framework emphasises the importance of looking at a pupil's needs in context, and provides useful resources to support this (for example, Learning Environment Checklist, Teacher Checklist for Whole-class Structures and Supports)...Of course, the principle that **pupils with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest levels of support** is of primary importance. This approach is also supported by information and engagement with external professionals, as required"* (2017 Guidelines: p.7).

(Appendix 5: Table 1 from the 2017 Guidelines: Identification of Educational Needs through the Continuum of Support Process).

"For pupils with significant, enduring and complex needs, collaboration with external professionals, including multi-disciplinary teams, is advised (for example, occupational therapist, speech and language therapist and psychologist)" (2017 Guidelines: p.11-12).

Planning: "*A Student Support File has been developed to enable schools to plan interventions and to*

track a pupil's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates teachers in documenting progress and needs over time and assists them in providing an appropriate level of support to pupils, in line with their level of need. Following a period of intervention and review of progress, a decision is made as to the appropriate level of support required by the pupil. This may result in a decision to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or move to a higher or lower level of support" (2017 Guidelines: p.10).

The 2017 Guidelines provide a template to support Teachers in maintaining a list of pupils who are in receipt of interventions through the Continuum of Support Framework (Appendix 6).

Step 2: Meeting Needs -

"Having identified a pupil's needs and the educational planning required to meet those needs, this second step emphasises the importance of effective teaching and learning strategies. The benefits of early-intervention and prevention programmes are highlighted. Guidance is also provided on target-setting" (2017 Guidelines: p.10).

- See also the sections in this policy that address:
 - the Roles of everybody involved in our whole-school policy
 - Prevention and early intervention
 - Programmes and resources mentioned in the 2017 Guidelines.
 - Maintaining Support Plans at each level of support (Educational Planning from the 2017 Guidelines are outlined in Appendix 7).

➤ **Target Setting:**

"Good target-setting is central to effective teaching and learning for pupils with special education needs. There are four guiding principles when devising targets for pupils. Targets should be:

- *Linked to assessment*
- *Strengths-based*

- *Linked to interventions*
- *Developed collaboratively*

Best practice indicates that targets should be few in number; they should be informed by priority learning needs and directly linked to suitable interventions. Targets should be based on the evidence collected through both formal and informal assessment approaches. Schools should consult with parents when setting targets and reviewing progress. The views of pupils should also be included in this process, through their direct involvement in the discussion or by gathering their views in advance of the review process. This collaboration will help ensure that targets are relevant, meaningful, realistic, and that they draw on the strengths and interests of pupils. Targets should be expressed in a way that is measurable and observable, and should reflect the specific special educational needs of individual pupils (for example, focus on social and emotional difficulties if that is a primary area of concern). While targets should be achievable within a specified time frame, they should also challenge and build on existing knowledge and address pupils' holistic needs" (2017 Guidelines: p. 16).

(Appendix 8: Appendix 1 of the 2017 Guidelines: Target setting as part of the problem-solving framework).

Step 3: Monitor and Record Progress -

"It is important that school leaders oversee a whole-school approach to monitoring and recording of progress. Pupils' progress in relation to achieving their targets should be regularly and carefully

monitored. This stage of the process is informed by effective measurement of baseline performance, including the use of criterion-referenced tests and other methods of assessment (for example, teacher-designed tests, checklists, samples of work, observation) that allow pupils to demonstrate their progress. This should lead to the establishment of specific targets to be achieved within a defined timeframe as outlined below.

Monitoring outcomes is part of a dynamic process of identification, target-setting, intervention and review, which in turn should lead to adjustments in support plans. The Student Support File provides schools with a useful resource to support and record this process. It includes a Support Review Record to guide teachers when monitoring progress and reviewing outcomes with parents and pupils. Such monitoring of progress, and subsequent adaptation of support plans, are key drivers of effective practice.

In addition to monitoring outcomes at the individual level, it is also important to review outcomes at group, class and whole-school level. This review could include measures of attainment, communication, independence, attendance, social inclusion and well-being (for example, sense of belonging and connectedness to school) for pupils with special educational needs" (2017 Guidelines: p. 17).

- Determine current level of performance
- Identify specific time-bound targets
- Measure progress.

The 2017 Guidelines go into further detail on planning the allocation of special education teaching supports (p.19) and include Table 2 (Appendix 9: Table 2: Planning Template to Guide the Allocation of Additional Teaching Supports for Pupils with Special Educational Needs).

"In planning the allocation of additional teaching supports, the over-riding principle is that resources are deployed to address the identified needs of pupils. **Importantly, those with the highest level of need should have access to the greatest level of support.** In addition to literacy and numeracy difficulties, many pupils will have specific needs in such areas as oral language, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development and application to learning. To guide them in allocating teaching supports, schools are again referred to the principles set out on page 5 of these guidelines. A planning template is provided in Table 2 to assist schools in the allocation of special education teaching " (2017 Guidelines: p.19).

Staff Meetings.

SEN provision in our school will be included on the agenda for staff meetings at least once per instructional term. Any shared Support Teachers attend staff meetings at their base schools.

Parent-Teacher Meetings.

The nature of SEN support means that meetings with parents are on-going and regular. The Support Teachers will fulfil the 'out of school' requirement of parent-teacher meetings at the base school.

Lunchtime Supervision.

If the shared Support Teachers have opted in to this scheme, he / she will complete lunchtime supervision at their base school only.

Review of this SEN Policy.

At least one meeting per year will accomplish regular review of the policy.

Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching.

- An instructional term is generally taken to mean 13-20 weeks of instruction. However, where the Support Teacher is shared between schools and is unable to meet pupils more than 2-3 times a week, an instructional term may be longer than 13-20 weeks.
- If possible, a meeting will be held at the end of each instructional term with the parents in cases where supplementary teaching is to be continued, to discuss the revised learning targets and activities in the pupil's Support Plan.
- Supplementary teaching will normally be discontinued where the targets have been met and the pupil (on assessment) is performing above the percentile laid down in the selection criteria for receiving support.
- The school may decide to discontinue supplementary teaching with some pupils (who have made satisfactory progress), in order for the Support Teacher to provide early intervention / prevention for Senior Infants, after for example the analysis of the MIST screening test results in February (pupils who have not responded to Stage One interventions by the class teacher, under the Staged Approach).
- Due consideration will be given to the overall needs of the school and all of its pupils.

Monitoring Progress.

Monitoring the academic progress of the pupils in this school will be accomplished by:

- Implementing Step 3 of the 2017 Guidelines, as previously mentioned in this policy.

Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching.

- An instructional term is generally taken to mean 13-20 weeks of instruction. However, where the Support Teacher is shared between schools and is unable to meet pupils more than 2-3 times a week, an instructional term may be longer than 13-20 weeks.
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- Due consideration will be given to the overall needs of the school and all of its pupils.

Monitoring Progress.

Monitoring the academic progress of the pupils in this school will be accomplished by:

- Implementing Step 3 of the 2017 Guidelines, as previously mentioned in this policy.
- Ongoing structured observation and assessment of the language, literacy and numeracy skills of the pupils in the infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties by the Class Teacher.
- Formal and informal testing and observation of work by the Class Teacher.
- Implementing the school policies on screening and the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching in English and / or in Mathematics by administering and scoring appropriate measures.

- Standardised assessments administered by the Class Teacher.
- Diagnostic testing administered by the Support Teacher.
- Record keeping (Children have a file in their classroom where records, test results and assessments are kept in a secure filing cabinet).
- Support Plans - opened, maintained and updated by Class Teachers at Classroom Support level.
- Support Plans - opened, maintained and updated by both Class Teachers and Support Teachers at School Support / School Support Plus level.
- Non-academic progress of pupils in this school can be reviewed informally, for example under the headings of improvements in the pupil's self esteem; school attendance; attitude to learning; attitude to school and general behaviour.

Liaising with Parents.

Effective communication with parents is critically important to the success of a support programme.

Communication with Parents.

- Teachers will take every opportunity to make parents familiar with the purpose and procedures of the school's support team.
- Activities may be organised in our school, from time to time, to increase the involvement of parents in their children's learning, e.g. Shared reading.
- Parents will be encouraged to support their child's learning through:
 - Developing children's oral language through discussion
 - Motivating children to read more
 - Creating a home environment where literacy can thrive
 - Selecting books that interest children
 - Counting, measuring and other activities involving number.

Principal Teacher Liaising with Parents.

While the Support Teacher will consult with parents and outside agencies on an ongoing basis, the Principal Teacher can facilitate the involvement of parents in the support process by:

- Establishing school policies and procedures, which enable parents to become involved effectively in the provision of support.
- Encouraging the organisation of information sessions for all parents on issues relating to the school's support procedures.
- Overseeing the development of links between teachers and service providers e.g. Speech and Language Therapists etc....

Class Teacher Liaising with Parents.

- Once a pupil has come to the attention of the school because of low achievement it will be possible for the Class Teacher (in the context of ongoing contact with the parents) to make them aware of the situation and to ascertain parental views about the child's performance at school.
- Meet with the parents of each pupil who has been selected for diagnostic assessment (if such a meeting is requested at this point by the parents).
- Indicate that a meeting with the Class Teacher and / or the Support Teacher and parents will take place following diagnostic assessment.
- If the pupil is selected for Classroom Support, the Class Teacher will:
 - Discuss priority learning needs and learning targets for the child's Support Plan with parents.

- Discuss ways in which attainment of the agreed targets can be supported at home.
- Communicate regularly with parents of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching at Classroom Support.
- Consult with parents when Classroom Support is to be discontinued (or escalated) and identify ways in which the pupil's learning can continue to be supported at school and at home.

The Support Teacher Liaising with Parents.

In addition to providing general information to parents about the support provision that is available in the school, the Support Teacher should:

- After diagnostic assessments have been completed, meet with each pupil's parents if possible to discuss the outcomes of the assessments.
- If the pupil is selected for School Support / School Support Plus, the Support Teacher will:
 - Discuss priority learning needs and possible learning targets for the child's Support Plan with the parents.
 - Discuss ways in which attainment of the agreed targets can be supported at home.
 - Ask parents (when practically possible) to sign Support Plan following discussion
 - Communicate on an ongoing basis with the parents of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching at School Support / School Support Plus, so that progress can be positively affirmed and any difficulties in implementing the pupil's learning programme at school or at home can either be anticipated and avoided or addressed without delay.
 - Consult with the parents of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching at School Support / School Support Plus level at the end of the instructional term to review the pupil's attainment of agreed learning targets, to discuss the level of supplementary teaching (if any) that will be provided in the next instructional term and to revise the pupil's Support Plan, if necessary.
 - Consult with parents when supplementary teaching is to be discontinued at School Support / School Support Plus, and identify ways in which the pupil's learning can continue to be supported at school and at home.
 - Demonstrate techniques and strategies to parents that will enable them to help with their child's development in such areas as oral language, reading, writing, spelling and mathematics, as appropriate.
 - Where relevant, collaborate with other teachers to advise parents on ways in which they can support their children's learning at home.

Monitoring and Reviewing this Policy.

The Post holder for SEN has overall responsibility currently for Monitoring and Reviewing this SEN Policy.

It is an ongoing and developmental process. Staff and Board of Management will engage in the developmental process, and the policy will be reviewed as necessary.

This policy was ratified on _____

Signed: _____ Chairperson BOM

List of Appendices.

Appendix 1.

The Staged Approach to Assessment, Identification and Programme Planning (Appendix 3 of Circular 02/05).

Appendix 2.

The 2017 Guidelines presentation of the NEPS Continuum of Support levels of support.

Appendix 3.

Personal Pupil Plan (PPP) template.

Appendix 4.

Transition from Primary to Post-Primary School.

Appendix 5.

Table 1: from the 2017 Guidelines. Identification of Educational Needs through the Continuum of Support Process.

Appendix 6.

Template: Pupils with Special Educational Needs who are in receipt of interventions through the Continuum of Support Framework.

Appendix 7.

Educational Planning (2017 Guidelines).

Appendix 8.

Appendix 1 from the 2017 Guidelines: Target-setting as part of the problem-solving framework.

Appendix 9.

Table 2: from the 2017 Guidelines Planning Template to Guide the Allocation of Additional Teaching Supports for Pupils with Special Educational Need

