

Our Lady of Mercy College



Special Educational Needs Policy

Mission Statement:

The core value of Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont is respect for all and the nurturing of individual potential academically, spiritually and culturally as a member of the school and wider community and in the spirit of the Mercy Ethos.

Rationale:

The aim of the Special Needs Department in Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont, is to provide a caring and respectful environment for students with learning difficulties where they are given an opportunity to achieve their highest potential and become life long learners.

The Special Needs Department endeavours to allow the students requiring different learning strategies to experience success in reading, writing, numeracy, oracy, social skills and their general wellbeing. Students' successes are recognised on Awards Day when students can receive awards for attendance, punctuality, diligence and academic achievement. In this way, the successes of students with Special Educational Needs do not go unnoticed. A Merit System is in operation where the students can get affirmation throughout the year.

Scope:

This policy covers students from 1st through to 6th year. The overall aim is to include all students socially and academically into mainstream classes as per CL 70/2014 & 14/2017 it also covers students taking Level 2 Learning Programmes.

How we achieve our aims:

In order to achieve our aims, some students may require supplementary teaching, specialised equipment, one to one or small group tuition, additional resources, in class support, reduced or an alternative curricula and the drawing up a Student Support Plan (SSP).

The Special Education Needs (SEN) Team

The SEN Team consists of two qualified SEN Teachers, two Special Needs Assistant (SNA), a number of teachers who [provide SEN support and the school's Guidance Counsellor. SEN is at present organised and coordinated by the Principal and Deputy

Principal and in accordance with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) circulars 70/14 & 14/2017 a fully trained team member acts as the day to day co-ordinator. The Special Educational Needs Team meets weekly to monitor and review the progress of learning support students and a monthly meeting is also held with the Principal to exchange information.

Definition

Students who fall within the Special Education Needs Category include:

- Students with learning difficulties
- Students with physical and sensory disabilities
- Students with emotional and behavioural disorders
- Students with other special needs
- Exceptionally able students

How Students are Identified

(1) The students requiring different learning styles and approaches are identified through means of a Standard Assessment Test which is administered by the Guidance Counsellor. Students undertake this before coming into the school usually in January. The results of these tests are made available to the SEN Department. Results are analysed and support offered to students who may require it.

(2) Parents of incoming students are *required* to outline to the school authorities any learning difficulties that their daughter may have at this stage.

(3) The Principal and Deputy Principal liaise with Primary Schools re in-coming students and information regarding students with SEN is passed on at this stage.

(4) Students who have been assessed under the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Continuum of Support or those who have a report may be offered additional support.

(5) Students may also be referred by their mainstream teachers further on in the year if it becomes obvious that they are struggling with the demands of the curriculum. Students themselves may approach the SEN Teacher if they feel unable to cope academically/emotionally as the year progresses or if they need help with a specific area. The same applies to those who are exceptionally able.

(6) Students who have not been assessed in primary but who are considered to have a learning difficulty are tested using the following tests as relevant.

WIAT Wechsler Individual Achievement Test

CAT Cognitive Abilities Test

DST Dyslexia Screening Test

NRIT Non Readers Intelligence Test.

WRAT Wide Ranging Achievement Test.

Provision

SEN Provision is seen in the context of a whole school approach. This follows the “Support for All, Support for Some and Support for a Few” model as per the Continuum of Support recommended by the (NEPS). Following this model, subject teachers use differentiation when responding to individual needs in a classroom context. This involves matching teaching strategies, approaches and expectations to the variety of experiences, abilities, needs and learning styles of the students.

Guidelines are followed regarding allocation as set out in the DES new allocation model (CL 14/2017). These guidelines highlight that it is the mainstream class teachers’ responsibility to cater for all students. Some students may require a SSP which is made available to support Teaching & Learning within the mainstream classroom.

In accordance with DES Guidelines for post-primary schools supporting students with SEN in mainstream schools the school identifies the students requiring resource teaching and learning support taking into account:

- 1 Standardised tests used for screening
- 2 Students who were previously in receipt of supplementary teaching from a SEN Teacher.
- 3 Students identified as having significant needs through a process of ongoing school based assessment and intervention, as set out in the Continuum of Support process.
- 4 Students who previously received learning support or resource teaching under the General Allocation Model (GAM) in their primary schools and who continue to show marked difficulties. (Appropriate information being passed on to include a student self-profile and parent/guardian input.)

Some students with learning difficulties are accommodated in small groups or are given one to one tuition where timetable allows. Team teaching will also be used depending on what best meets the needs of the students.

A student may be exempt from the study of certain subjects as per CL 0053/19. Students receiving support may only need this intervention for a short length of time or until the learning difficulty is remediated. This will occur following consultation with parents, guardians and teachers.

Parents are informed that their daughter may be withdrawn from a particular subject area and their consent will be sought in writing. Their permission is also sought before their daughter’s needs are discussed with the Educational Psychologist.

The SEN Team continually interacts with parents/guardians, outside agencies, psychologists, speech and language therapists, care workers, class teachers, Year Heads, the Deputy Principal and Principal.

Students receiving learning support are regularly assessed and progress is monitored and recorded on their SSP. Where an evidence based programme is being implemented, students are pre-tested and post-tested to assess progress.

Staff are informed of the needs of new, incoming students at the start of every academic year.

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

Where the Department offers *access to* the Special Needs Assistant scheme, their role is to provide schools with additional adult support staff who can assist children with special educational needs who also have additional care needs. Such support is provided in order to facilitate the attendance of those pupils at school and also to minimise disruption to class or teaching time for the pupils concerned, or for their peers, and with a view to developing their independent living skills. As stated in Circular 0030/2014

Roles & Responsibilities:

Parents:

To provide the school with timely access to professional reports so that relevant deadlines are met and that the critical, collaborative planning to meet the student needs can take place.

To attend meetings and complete all relevant paperwork as quickly as possible.

To **ensure** that they are active participants **in the formation and review of the SSP** and should attend **all parent teacher and general meeting as arranged by the school.**

To support at home, evidenced based programmes that are being implemented in the school.

Students:

In as far as appropriate, a student with special educational needs should be involved in **the development, implementation and review of their SSP**. This is likely to have a positive effect on the relationship between the student and her teachers. Where an evidence based programme is being implemented for a student, that student is required to undertake the revision work at home, after school.

Principal:

To implement on behalf of the Board of Management (BOM) and to manage the day to day implementation of the policy and provision for students with Special Education Needs (SEN). The Principal may delegate certain functions to appropriate teachers.

To keep the BOM informed of any issues that relate to SEN.

To appoint a SET Coordinator from amongst the staff and to liaise with the co-ordinator.

To ensure the effective and efficient use of these resources.

To ensure that consultation takes place with primary schools regarding enrolment of students with SEN.

To promote a whole school approach to special education needs, make staff aware of their responsibilities in this area and to facilitate appropriate professional development.

Board of Management:

To ensure that all students with learning support/special education needs are identified and assessed.

To ensure the school has a policy in place and to monitor the implementation and review as appropriate.

To ensure that parents are consulted with regard to and are invited to participate in the making of all significant decisions concerning the students' education.
To ensure that the Special Education Needs Policy forms part of the School Plan.
To develop a whole school approach to literacy & numeracy.

SET Coordinator;

To assemble the information from the feeder schools regarding incoming students with special needs.

To liaise with parents regarding their daughters educational requirements and to procure relevant information when necessary.

To liaise with outside agencies as required and refer students to NEPS when appropriate.

To liaise with teachers regarding students with special needs and to provide them with relevant information and strategies where appropriate.

To convene regular meetings with teachers that are providing additional support to students with SEN and to maintain minutes of all meetings.

To ensure that teachers providing additional support are covering appropriate levels of material with their groups.

To administer diagnostic testing where and when appropriate.

To coordinate planning for individual students where necessary.

To coordinate applications to the Department of Education and Skills for Reasonable Accommodation at Certificate Examinations (RACE).

To complete applications for Assisted Technology and to organise its setting when granted.

To provide appropriate information to parents and teachers of exceptionally bright students to ensure their educational needs are being met

Results analysis

To maintain confidential records on relevant students and to return these confidential reports to the Principal when students are leaving school

To assist with organising and recording data on the schools systems as appropriate.

Links to other policies:

Pastoral Care Policy

Guidance & Counselling Policy

Homework Policy & Good Practice Guidelines

Assessment Policy

Literacy Policy

Exceptionally Able Student Policy

Best Practice Guidelines for teaching/dealing with students on a one to one basis.

Review and Monitoring:

This policy will be reviewed and evaluated every 3 years or as necessary. This will be done within the framework of school development planning.

Reviewed & ratified by the Board of Management October 20th 2020

Best Practice Guidelines for teaching/dealing with students on a one to one basis.

Any teaching/interview requiring a one-to-one situation should be conducted in a room with the door open. In situations where this is not possible the room should have a window of clear glass which is left uncovered during the class.

Teaching/interviews in rooms should be conducted so that the member of staff and the student can be seen through the door window.

The door to the room where appropriate should be left unlocked throughout the interview. Providing the nature of the interview permits it, the door should be ajar during the time of the interview.

Whenever possible seek to ensure that the other members of staff/students are working close by during the time of interview.

Where there is likely to be staff/students working close by you during the school day this is not likely to be the case after school. If only one student is being retained after school for such an interview it will only take place if the following conditions are met.

- (a) To have another student waiting outside the room- only reasonably possible if the duration of the interview is to be short.
- (b) To consider moving the interview to a room closer to where staff are likely to be present.

Remember: Should it be necessary to detain a student for any length of time after the end of school, whatever reasons, prior warning should have been given to the parents.

Let another member of staff know of place, time and purpose of the interview before it takes place.

Seek to ensure the interview is conducted in an orderly manner, taking just as long as is necessary to complete the business of the meeting. Advise of likely duration of interview at outset and record.

Wherever possible leave space between the student and yourself rather than sit next to her during the class/interview. Ideally have a desk between teacher and student. Whilst there are occasions where you might need to sit next to the student (e.g. when looking together at a piece of work). There are many others when the teaching/interview should be conducted with the member of staff sitting opposite and separate from the student.

Avoid physical contact with the student during the interview. Staff are also advised to be extremely cautious in any circumstances that appear to physical restraint. Attempts to comfort students by any form of physical contact can be open to misinterpretation.

What if you are placed at risk by the action of a student? Should this situation arise as a result of any suggestive actions or words by a student, you should end the interview immediately and inform the student that you will continue the interview later with another member of staff present or that you will ask another member of staff to continue it.

You should find another member of staff at once and tell him/her what has happened. If the Principal or Deputy Principal is not available at the time tell whoever is available. Do not leave it until later before reporting the incident. Inform the Principal or Deputy Principal as soon as possible and confirm details of the incident in writing to him/her.