



Loreto College, Mullingar

# Co-Teaching Policy

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## **Introduction:**

In line with our school ethos, Loreto College, Mullingar is committed to ensuring the provision of learning for every child recognising and respecting that each student is unique. We endeavour to facilitate the success of all of our students, and acknowledge there is a collective responsibility to ensure the needs of all Loreto College's students are met by all of their teachers.

Our Co-Teaching policy was coordinated by the Special Educational Needs team, in consultation with senior management. This policy document aims to outline an aspect of additional educational support for students with special educational needs (SEN) in the school and the philosophy which underpins it. It is written in the context of The Education Act (1998) in line with 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). Four further publications have informed the content of this policy- "Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs-Post Primary Guidelines" (Department of Education & Science (DES) Inspectorate: 2007), "Exceptionally Able Students-Draft Guidelines for Teachers" (NCCA: 2007), "Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools" and , "Guidelines for Post Primary Schools-Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools" (DES: 2017). The policy is a revised and amended policy in accordance with Circular No 0014/2017. The document should be read in conjunction with the following policies: (1) Admissions (2) SEN (4) Assessment (5) Anti-Bullying (6) Guidance and Counselling Policy (7) Pastoral Care (8) School Improvement Plan.

The Loreto tradition is centred in God and values such as truth, freedom, justice, sincerity and joy. Loreto schools aim to encourage respect between staff and students and also encourage a selfless and generous spirit with a willingness to serve others, especially those most in need.

## **Definition:**

Co-teaching is two or more people sharing responsibility for teaching some or all of the students assigned to a classroom. It involves the distribution of responsibility among people for planning, instruction and evaluation for a classroom of students.

Co-teaching is the recommended strategy by the NCSE in targeting students who are both above and below average abilities. Staff establish trust, develop and work on communication, share the chores, celebrate, work together creatively to overcome inevitable challenges and problems and anticipate conflict and handle it in a constructive way.

This policy was drawn up by staff of Loreto College, Mullingar in consultation with and ratified by the Board of Management and circulated to staff. It is also available for parents/guardians on the school's website.

## **Rationale:**

A key aim of this policy is to provide practical guidance to staff, parents and other interested parties about our SEN procedures and practices. The objective of co-teaching is to promote inclusive learning that can impact positively upon the learning experiences of both staff and pupils. The Guidelines on the provision of special education at post primary level (2007) and the N.C.C.A. documents on the same topic (2006) recommend the provision of support within the regular classroom. DES Circular 24/03 states that "wherever possible, schools should provide additional help for children in the mainstream classroom." The purpose of

this policy is to document current and future practice on co-teaching.

### **Inclusivity:**

Creating an inclusive school environment is essential to the ethos of our school. An inclusive school environment reflects values and affirms linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity. The Department of Education and Skills recognises that it is important that schools have policies and procedures in place that promote and facilitate the inclusion of all children. The employment of team-teaching takes the stigma away from any one student and provides a better learning and teaching environment for all.

Our co-teaching model is one method of providing an inclusive educational placement for all students. Co-teaching is effective for students with a variety of instructional needs, including English language learners, children with disabilities, and gifted children.

### **Deployment of Special Education Teachers (SETs):**

In accordance with circular 0014/2017 our school has implemented as best practice co-teaching as the key method of supporting students with additional educational needs. The circular states, "Individualised learning needs can be addressed in a variety of ways and should not be solely equated with withdrawal from class for one-to-one or group tuition. Configurations of team-teaching have been shown to provide an appropriate model for engaging with individual needs in the collective setting of the classroom. As necessary, this can be combined with withdrawal for intensive teaching of specific skills, based on level of need.

The BOM have decided, under the advice, words and spirit of circular 0014/2017 to allocate co-teachers and to develop a co-teaching model throughout the school to ensure each student's needs are most appropriately met.

This decision was made with the interests of the students at heart and to enable staff to best cater for the individual educational needs of each student. Research has demonstrated that co-teaching is an effective instructional strategy for enhancing the success of students. This is in line with circular 0014/2017.

### **Elements of Co-Teaching:**

A co-teaching team is defined as two or more people who agree to do the following:

- Coordinate their work to achieve at least one common, publicly agreed-on goal.
- Share a belief system that supports the idea that each of the co-teaching team members has unique and needed expertise.
- Demonstrate parity by alternatively engaging in the dual roles of the teacher and learner, expert and novice, giver and recipient of knowledge or skills.
- Use a distributed functions theory of leadership as per "Looking at Our School 2016" in which the task and relationship functions of the traditional lone teacher are distributed among all co-teaching members.
- Use a cooperative process that includes face-to-face interaction, positive interdependence, interpersonal skills, monitoring co-teacher progress, and individual accountability.

### **Benefits of Co-Teaching:**

- Teacher to student ratio is increased, leading to better teaching and learning

conditions.

- Teachers are able to use research-proven teaching strategies effectively.
- Shared expertise among two or more teachers.
- Shared responsibility for instruction and management.
- Increased opportunity to differentiate for student needs.
- Greater social integration among student sub-groups.
- Demonstrated improvement in student achievement.
- A greater sense of community is fostered in the classroom.
- Co-teachers report professional growth, personal growth and enhanced motivation.
- All children learn from each other.
- 'Typical' children become more accepting of individual differences.
- Improved self-esteem amongst students.
- Students acquire leadership skills/empathetic exposure to a variety of teaching styles.
- SEN students can develop peer role-models.

### **Co-Teaching Approaches:**

Teachers implement co-teaching somewhat differently to meet the needs of their integrated instructional styles, and the needs of the students in their care.

Co-teaching can be practised through the following five formats:

#### 1. One Teach / One Support

(More recently, some experts refer to 6 formats based on the division of the "One Teach/One Support" model into two specific models: "One Teach/ One Observe" and "One Teach/One Assist".)

#### 2. Station Teaching

#### 3. Team Teaching

#### 4. Alternative Teaching

#### 5. Parallel Teaching

In our school, all partners participate fully in all aspects of instruction; each teacher's role is coordinated to contribute to the effectiveness of the lesson.

### **One Teach/One Support:**

#### **Implementation:**

- One teacher leads instruction, while the other provides support to students who need additional help or enrichment, gathers observation data, or provides classroom management.
- Both teachers know the distinct role they are carrying out in the lesson.
- One Teach/One Support is often used when teaching new material/concepts or when one teacher has greater content expertise than the other.

Caution: If used too often with the same teacher taking the instructional lead, the One Teach/One Support



format can lead to students seeing one teacher as the authority over the other teacher.

## Station Teaching:

### Implementation:

- Each teacher works with a small group of children who rotate among various stations to complete the different tasks related to the same instructional content/objective.
- Station Teaching is an efficient use of time that allows all students to experience multiple related instructional activities.



- Teachers must communicate to coordinate the tasks and timing at the different stations to support the learning objectives.

Caution: Station Teaching is **not used for differentiation purposes** as all students participate in all stations.

## Team Teaching:

### Implementation:

- Both teachers "play off" each other while sharing the instructional role.
- When properly implemented, Team Teaching shows clear evidence that the teachers planned together in order to integrate their roles within the lesson.



Caution: Team Teaching is generally considered the hardest format to implement, as both teachers must be equally prepared and knowledgeable about the lesson content. Teachers who achieve this level of partnership often state their preference for co-teaching in the future.

## Alternative Teaching:

### Implementation:

- One teacher instructs a large group while the other works with a smaller group on different content/tasks.
- Teachers work together to determine the groups and the objectives and expected outcomes, activities, and assessment for the content they are teaching to their individual groups.
- Alternative Teaching is appropriate for enriching or remediating instruction for a small group and is commonly used to differentiate instruction in inclusive or collaborative classrooms.

Caution: If the same group of students is always separated for alternative instruction, it works against the

benefits of inclusion/collaboration.

## Parallel Teaching:

### Implementation:

- Class is split into small groups with each co-teacher responsible for implementing the same lesson to a group.
- Communication and planning must be done together for the co-teachers to develop the parallel structure and to assure that groups receive the same quality instruction.

Caution: It is preferable to vary the groups and the teacher so that all students see the equal status of the co-teachers.



### Communication With the Co-Team:

The underlying key to the success of this co-teaching model is communication. It is imperative that teachers actively participate in professional conversations to enable the implementation of co-teaching.

There are three communication strategies in particular that co-teachers use to communicate more effectively; helping to meet each other's needs, adjusting to each other's learning styles. Effective co-teachers must know not only their students, but also themselves and their co-teacher partners. When co-teachers match their communication patterns to meet the communication preferences and personality types of their partners, they can experience increased achievements and satisfaction in what they are doing both individually and jointly.

### Support From Management:

Management endeavours to support co-teaching to its fullest by facilitating the following:

- Professional development for staff
- Scheduled planning time allocated per teacher from Croke Park hours
- Scheduled evaluation of process with Principal and Deputy Principal
- Planning templates for staff
- Time to set student expectations at the beginning and throughout the year
- Making relevant adjustments where possible to best meet the needs of the children in the class
- Providing forums for airing concerns and generating viable solutions
- Timetabling of SETs where possible as co-teaching partner
- Ensuring that absent teachers in co-teaching partnerships are replaced using Supervision & Substitution

### The Role of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs):

- SNAs, where applicable, attend planning meetings
- All tasks/duties must be agreed to by the SNA
- It is important that the SNA feels supported and confident in his/her agreed role.
- The duties of SNAs are of a *non-teaching nature* (i.e. never should a SNA have a station whereby

he/she

is leading new learning)

- SNA provides any special assistance required by students with additional educational needs throughout the school day, while promoting their independence.
- SNA is to be used as a resource in the classroom. However it is important that all activities/stations that SNA works with are something the SNA feels comfortable and confident with.

### **Issues in Planning for Co-Teaching:**

There are numerous organisational, logistical, instructional and communication issues related to role clarification that must be jointly agreed to by members of co-teaching teams. [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#) highlights discussion points for initial co-planning meetings and the clarity gained at the initial meeting stage with agreement on defined roles are crucial to the success of the co-teaching arrangement.

### **Timetabling:**

Co-teaching is awarded hours from the school's allocation of resource hours on a needs basis. Literacy and numeracy are prioritised, and co-teaching occurs mainly at Junior Cycle level in English and Maths. It can and does occur, however, at senior cycle on a needs basis also. Class sizes in conjunction with need can be a determining factor in timetabling and the allocation of co-teachers.

Co-teaching allocation varies from academic year to academic year. Review meetings attended by the SEN team and management occur to assess prospective needs amongst the year groups and co-teacher personnel are appointed based on this.

### **Planning Time and Management Support:**

Management support is essential for the successful and beneficial outcomes of co-teaching. Co-planning meetings are, where possible, scheduled as part of Croke Park Hours. School management will work with staff to provide systematic professional development, to establish coaching and mentoring opportunities for learning new ways of working together and to arrange master schedules so that co-teams can teach and



plan together.

**Assessment:**

Please see the school's Assessment Policy on assessment strategies.

**Implementation & Review:**

This policy will be implemented from October 2022 upon ratification by the Board of Management.

It will be reviewed by the Special Educational Needs Team and staff in Loreto College, Mullingar.

Signed: Aine Wodan Mas Chairperson to the Board of Management

Date: 20/9/22

Appendices:

**APPENDIX 1: PLANNING FOR CO-TEACHING - CHECKLIST 1**



**Planning for Co-teaching**

Questions?	Teacher A (Mainstream)	Teacher B (Support)	Together
<b>Content:</b>			
Who plans the lessons?			
Who has responsibility for evaluation?			
Who writes up the lesson plans/evaluations?			
Who marks the copies/corrects homework?			
Who sets exam papers?			
Who marks exams?			
Who teaches the main group?			
Who teaches the 'target group'?			
<b>Classroom &amp; materials:</b>			
Who defines the area within which people work?			
Who looks after materials?			
Who adapts materials for students for whom they are unsuitable?			
<b>Classroom Management:</b>			
Who has responsibility for discipline/rules?			
Who monitors attendance, punctuality, etc?			
Who goes to the PTM?			
Who will liaise with tutor/Year Head/management?			
Other?			



**Co-Teaching Partner Checklist**

**Co-teaching partners have:**

Discussed and understood the definition of co-teaching.	
Discussed and identified preferred co-teaching models.	
Discussed and shared understandings with regard to students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and expectations in relation to accommodations, and instructional needs.	
Shared, discussed, and identified shared roles and responsibilities.	
Discussed perceptions of a shared classroom.	
Shared and discussed similar beliefs and how to resolve differences if they arise.	
Shared the potential strengths and differences each teacher brings to the co-teaching dynamic.	
<p>Shared and discussed perceptions on the following topics:</p> <p>Classroom rules _____</p> <p>Assessment _____</p> <p>Disciplinary issues _____</p> <p>Parent contact _____</p> <p>Classroom routines _____</p> <p>Homework _____</p> <p>Physical Environment of classroom _____</p> <p>Teacher style or preference _____</p> <p>Other _____</p>	

**Co-Teaching Scheme of Work**

<b>Term:</b>	<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Class:</b>
<b>Class Teacher:</b>	<b>Support Teacher:</b>	<b>Class Times:</b>

<b>Student</b>	<b>Area of need/Where student excels</b>

<b>Strategies:</b>
<b>Resources:</b>

Please record accurately, work carried out:

<b>Week One</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Week Two</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Week Three</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Week Four</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>

<b>Week Five Date:</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Week Six Date:</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>

**Review and Feedback:  
In consultation with class teacher:**

<b>Evaluation of term</b>	
<b>Most successful and why?</b>	
<b>Least successful and why?</b>	
<b>Next Steps:</b>	

**APPENDIX 4: PLANNING FOR CO-TEACHING - SAMPLE OVERVIEW OF WORK & EVALUATION TEMPLATE**

**Co-Teaching Scheme of Work**

<b>Term: 1</b>	<b>Subject: English</b>	<b>Class: 1A</b>
<b>Class Teacher:</b> Mr J. Bloggs	<b>Support Teacher:</b> Ms A. Non	<b>Class Times:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monday - 1:00 - 1.30</li> <li>• Tuesday - 1.40 - 2.20</li> <li>• Wed - 11:10 - 11:50</li> <li>• Thur - 2.20 - 3.00</li> <li>• Fri - 8.55 - 9.35</li> </ul>

<b>Student</b>	<b>Area of Need/Where student excels</b>
CBre	Literacy support in Primary School. Focus and attention. Consolidation of material a focus
HGra	Literacy support in Primary School. Absenteeism hindering progress and gaps in learning.
KKen	SLD -Dyslexia. Literacy support and ensuring focused and on task, fully comprehending material
TReb	High attainment on CAT4
HRob	17:00+ RA in NGRT
CScu	Literacy - support in PS. Low attainment in Verbal battery. (60% in English exam in May). Motivation.

**Strategies:**

Keyword banks; LSCWC

Exemplars through modelling.

Use of graphic organisers for planning.

Pair work (online) for presentations

**Resources:**

Keyword template; LSCWC grid; keyword banks; visuals; video examples - Vlogs; Google Slides templates; Jamboard; summary notes

Please record accurately, work carried out:

<b>Week One</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<p><u>Mon:</u> NLTs - "You'll Never..." Comprehension and written questions.</p> <p><u>Tue:</u></p> <p><u>Wed:</u></p> <p><u>Thur:</u></p> <p><u>Fri:</u></p>		<p><u>Mon:</u> Absent students KKen, TReb Oral feedback on the lower order questions. Written PQE response (initially modelled). Keywords exercise. Attention given to CBre to reinforce modelling of response whilst observing the written work of all</p> <p><u>Tue:</u></p> <p><u>Wed:</u></p> <p><u>Thur:</u></p> <p><u>Fri:</u></p>
<b>Week Two</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Week Three</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
(Etc.)		

Review and Feedback:

In consultation with class teacher:

<p><b>Evaluation of term</b></p>	<p><b>Co-Teacher:</b> Overall, a well-motivated class; behaviour is very good and reluctant participants engage well for the most part as a good, strong work ethic is the modus operandi within this particular cohort.</p> <p>Varied tasks within the six-week period kept the class engaged - the slight detection of monotony within the NLTs section at the beginning was sidestepped with the more intense focus on the interactive Vlogging and students' interests were piqued again across the board.</p> <p>Writing skills vary across the cohort from exceptionally strong candidates to those who require individual attention in terms of their written literacy.</p> <p><b>Lead Teacher:</b> I agree with this perspective, I think that the NLTs are pitched at quite a high level for second years in general which put some students under pressure especially in having to break down questions before they could be approached. I feel that we worked on NLTs for longer than was needed but at least the vlogging section allowed for a bit more variety. I considered pushing this further into students completing their own vlogs but I'm not sure confidence is high enough within the group. Oral work will need development in advance of CBA1.</p>
<p><b>Most successful and why?</b></p>	<p><b>Co-Teacher:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of randomiser for questioning/reading out of work</li> <li>• Use of Class Dojo as extrinsic motivator</li> <li>• Variety of methodologies, but in particular, visual methods</li> <li>• Broad selection of students' written work each day - general feedback on apostrophe use/mis-use, spellings, presentation of quotations in written work, syntax issues; the approach from the students' perspective of being in tandem/complementary to the class teacher as a whole class blitz on literacy skills encouraged questioning from all the students, leading to those more in need confidently asking for help.</li> </ul> <p><b>Lead Teacher:</b> I think that having the support of a team teacher also worked very well in this context. There are a lot of quiet girls who tend to silently carry their struggles and it is hard to consistently reach all of them especially given that there are also several very vocal students in the class who like to pull focus. The group clearly likes variety in their activities and most larger writing tasks need to be well scaffolded from small written tasks.</p>
<p><b>Least successful and why?</b></p>	<p><b>Co-Teacher:</b> Consistent, targeted help was difficult to maintain due to the high level of absenteeism amongst the cohort who present as having the most difficulty. Students, when present, were receptive to help, but, in particular in the study of the novel, gaps in knowledge function as a demotivator. Getting the student up to speed often felt futile as the pattern of absenteeism continued and the process of catch-up was required again; consolidation of learning, therefore, proved a challenge due to this key issue of absenteeism.</p> <p><b>Lead Teacher:</b> I agree that for many of the students with additional learning needs, the need to improve their attendance is of paramount importance so as to avoid the vicious cycle of feeling lost in class.</p>



**Next Steps:**

Despite the excellent behaviour of this cohort, a large level of need is evident.

In the interim before a return to this cohort for another block period, CBre and KKen will be met in order to reinforce that learning from their prescribed text once weekly where possible.