



Loreto College Mullingar
Established - 1881

Special Educational Needs Policy

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Introductory Statement:

Our SEN policy was coordinated by the Special Educational Needs (SEN) team, in consultation with senior management, staff and in consideration of student voice. This policy document aims to outline the form that additional educational support for students with special educational needs takes in the school and the philosophy which underpins it. It is written in the context of *The Education Act (1998)* and takes cognisance of *The Equal Status Act (2000)*, *The Equality Act (2004)*, *The Education Welfare Act (2000)*, *The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)* and *The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)*. 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*", "*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) Anti-Bullying (3) Guidance and Counselling Policy (4) Health and Safety (5) Child Protection (6) Pastoral Care (7) School Improvement Plan (8) Co-Teaching Policy.

School Information:

Most Rev. Dr Nulty established Loreto Convent in 1881. On 25th March, 1881 three nuns arrived from Loreto Convent Navan, to take charge of the new institution. It began as a day school and by 1900 it had ten boarders.

The convent has been enlarged several times since. August 1960 saw the opening of an extension that included a new hall, dormitories and classrooms. In 1995, the convent made some additional space available to the school, enabling the development of a careers room, a prayer room and an extra classroom.

On 5th May 2011, Minister Willie Penrose officially turned over the first sod signifying the start of a major extension / refurbishment programme to take place. This work concluded in a new gymnasium, new office space, new playing fields consisting of a basketball court and Astroturf, new science labs and a general refurbishment of the existing school building. There are currently 857 girls on the roll.

Rationale:

This policy document aims to outline the form that additional educational support for students with special educational needs (S.E.N.) takes in the school and the philosophy which underpins it.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide practical guidance to staff, parents and other interested parties about our SEN procedures and practices.
- outline the framework for addressing additional needs in our school.

- comply with legislation-The Education Act (1998) and takes cognisance of The Equal Status Act (2000), The Equality Act (2004), The Education Welfare Act (2000), The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003) and The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004).
- fulfil DES circular 0014/17 -Circular to the Management Authorities of all Mainstream Post Primary Schools; Special Education Teaching Allocation and new 2017 Guidelines for Post Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools.
- adheres to the information outlined in the following publications- "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) and "Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools".

The policy is a revision of one published in December 2019.

Mission Statement:

"Loreto / IBVM education values and respects each student and seeks to educate all irrespective of ability ... in an open learning environment" (Kolkata Guidelines: Page 6).

In Loreto College, we endeavour to ensure that our school is experienced "as a caring Christian Community in which students have the opportunity to achieve academic excellence and to grow spiritually, emotionally, socially, creatively and physically in a healthy environment". Excellence is understood in relation to each one's potential.

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

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

Aims of the Policy:

This policy aims to outline our procedures and practices of how we:

- identify additional needs that our students may have
- allocate resources to effectively meet the needs of students with additional needs
- divide the roles and responsibilities among our school community in relation to students with additional needs
- track, monitor, review and report on the progress of students with additional needs
- communicate information between the SEN team, principal, staff and parents/guardians.

Definitions:

- (a) Students with special educational needs are those who are restricted from participating in and benefiting from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition

which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition. (EPSEN Act 2004).

- (b) Exceptionally able students are those understood to require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for in the general cohort of students.

Categories of Special Education Needs (SEN):

To date, the school has provided for the following categories of students with Special Educational Need:

- Learning Support Students
- Borderline/Mild General Learning Disability
- Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)
- Specific Learning Difficulty - Dyslexia, Dyscalculia
- Physical Disabilities- Dyspraxia, Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida
- Specific Language Impairment (SLI)
- Sensory Difficulties (Hearing and Visual Impairments)
- Moderate Learning Disability
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

In addition to these categories we understand that under *circular 08/02 (Appendix 3)* the following categories of SEN exist also:

- Down's Syndrome
- Moderate General Learning Disability
- Severe / Profound General Learning Disability

Access to Learning Support:

The following students may be selected for Learning Support/Special Education provision in our school:

- A student who has had a psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support.
- A student who has a Specific Learning Difficulty or a Mild Learning Difficulty.
- A student who received Learning Support in Primary School.
- A student identified from Primary STen scores.
- A student identified from CAT4/NGRT scores.
- A student identified by their teachers as having difficulty with one or more of their subjects (Referral System).
- A student with emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- A student from a minority background with associated learning difficulties (EAL; Cultural).
- A student with physical difficulties.
- A student with a visual/hearing impairment.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Board of Management (BOM):

The BOM oversees the development, implementation and review of school policy on SEN. They arrange for a periodic review of the range of curriculum provision within the school to ensure that suitable programmes are on offer to all students. They provide resources for the professional development of staff in supporting students with special educational needs and ensure adequate classroom accommodation, secure storage space and effective teaching resources are provided. The BOM will also ensure that the rights of parents as prescribed in legislation are upheld in the school.

The SEN Core Team:

The SEN Core Team will be made up, where possible, of year group Anchors (liaison personnel for parents, staff and outside agencies), Guidance Counsellor(s), a SENCO, SETs/Learning Support teachers and a member of senior management. Each of these members of the team will have their own roles and responsibilities, as outlined below.

Principal:

The *Guidelines for Post Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (page 27, 2017)* outlined the principal has overall responsibility for SEN procedures and practices in the school. It states that 'Under current legislation the principal of the school has overall responsibility for ensuring that the special educational needs of students are met. Consequently, the principal has the general responsibility for establishing and promoting whole-school policies and procedures that are supportive of the learning of all students, including those with special educational needs' (*Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines; DES, 2007, p 67*). The new allocation model states that the principal's leadership role is central.

The school principal should -

- Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policies and procedures relating to the inclusion of students with special educational needs
- Oversee a whole-school approach to assessment and screening to identify needs and to guide the allocation of appropriate supports
- Ensure effective engagement with feeder primary schools to support the transition of students with special educational needs
- In collaboration with the in-school management team, discharge a key function in the deployment of staff, allocation of resources, organisation of students and timetabling
- Ensure that systems are in place for effective sharing of relevant information on students' needs with all subject teachers
- Facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to the education of students with special educational needs, and ensure that all school staff (subject teachers and special education teachers, guidance counsellors, special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area
- Ensure that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, students and external professionals/agencies.

- In implementing the new resource allocation model, principals should consider the formation of a special education needs team whose members have expertise and interest in special education so that provision can be coordinated efficiently and flexibly to meet a range of needs. Subject to his/her overall statutory responsibilities, the principal may delegate the performance of specific responsibilities to other staff members, including members of the special education needs team.

The Guidance Counsellor:

The Guidance Counsellors' role within the SEN team consists largely of the following functions -

- Administering diagnostic assessment test
- Counselling in personal, educational and career development
- Psychometric testing
- Career information management
- Consultations with Special Educational Needs team, staff and parents
- Referrals to other professionals and agencies
- Facilitating an induction week for specific SEN students prior to the commencement of the first academic year
- Implementation of the Red Card system*

*Students may, in consultation with Guidance Counsellors and students' parents/guardians, be given access to a 'Red Card' - a strategy whereby the student has a recognisable signal to teachers in situations where verbal communication may be difficult regarding their need for a time out. Students are advised very clearly on protocol around the use of the card in line with health and safety measures.

SEN Coordinator (SENCO):

The SENCO should -

- Communicate with the principal in relation to SEN matters on an on-going basis
- Liaise with external agencies about the provision for students with additional needs
- Liaise with the NEPS psychologist, the SEN team and class teachers to prioritise students for psychological assessments (NEPS)
- Liaise with SEN Anchors to identify, support and monitor students with additional needs
- Coordinate regular SEN team planning meetings to ensure effective communication and support for students with additional needs
- Collaborate with the SEN team in creating timetables for additional support
- Meet with parents regarding any concerns about their child, advise parents on procedures for availing of special needs services and update them regarding their progress
- Coordinate school standardised testing at each year level
- Coordinate the screening of students for additional support, using the results of standardised tests
- Select students for external diagnostic assessment, where parental permission has been sought and granted

- Oversee the tracking system of test results on password-protected software to monitor the progress of students
- Maintain lists of students who are receiving additional support
- Devise Learning Support Student Profile for incoming students with and Educational Psychological Report or clinical report on file
- Organise and purchase resources
- Ensure staff are trained in CPD and organise same

Anchor:

The SEN Anchor for each year group should -

- Coordinate and gather data on students
- Support whole-school procedures for screening
- Administer and interpret diagnostic tests and inform class teachers and parents of the outcomes
- Follow up on referrals from subject based teachers
- Screen and test students when a referral or concern is raised
- Plan the transition for students with special educational needs from primary to post primary school
- Support the communication of information regarding students' needs to subject teachers, form tutors and year-heads
- Liaise with parents and students
- Coordinate class groups and offer advice and support to class teachers regarding students on their caseload
- Discuss the needs and progress of students on their caseload at planning meetings
- Open a Student Support File once additional needs have been identified and classroom support is required
- Plan, implement and review student support plans
- Support the class teacher in creating a Student Support Plan for the Students Support File once additional support is implemented
- Liaise with Learning Support Teachers regarding schemes of work
- Consult with Learning Support Teachers, parents/guardians and other staff members to identify priority learning goals for each student in receipt of School Support Plus
- Communicate with the SENCO and the SEN team regarding any concerns raised by subject teachers at SEN team planning meetings
- Update and maintain class SEN records and test results
- Liaise with external agencies about the provision for students with additional needs
- Provide supplementary teaching for literacy and numeracy on a withdrawal and in-class support basis
- Provide a central hub for Special Education Teachers (SETs)/Learning Support Teachers for the sharing of termly schemes of work for students with SEN
- Meet with Year Head
- Coordinate a list of students in year group with Irish Exemptions
- Coordinate a list of students in a year group that may be eligible for RACE and screen students accordingly, and apply for RACE where necessary.
- Communicate with parents when needed
- Assist students with their concerns and be a point of contact for students

- Compile a Personal Profile Plan (PPP) and for students in receipt of SNA access and ensure the PPP is submitted to the NCSE if SNA access for each individual student is to continue in the next academic year.
- Provide necessary information to a SEN student receiving third level institution once a transfer letter has been received

This anchor system ensures a tight knit referral system and allows for comprehensive tracking of all students.

Class Teacher:

Class teachers have primary responsibility for the teaching and learning of **all** students in his/her class, including those selected for additional support. They should

- Implement teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all students and, to the greatest extent possible, prevent the emergence of learning difficulties
- Create a positive learning environment that accommodates and takes cognisance of learning difficulties
- Differentiate teaching strategies, approaches and expectations to the range of experiences, abilities, needs and learning styles in their class
- Discuss outcomes of standardised testing with SEN Anchor to assist in the selection of students for Learning Support
- Meet with parents regarding concerns about their child and update them regarding their progress
- Gather information and assess students presenting with needs to inform teaching and learning using the Continuum of Support
- Develop classroom support plans for students in receipt of Classroom Support
- Collaborate with SEN Anchor to develop Individual Learning Profile and Individual Pupil Learning Profile for Whole School & Classroom Support Checklist File once additional needs have been identified for a student and classroom support is required
- Where applicable, collaborate with the SEN team regarding teaching aims and activities for team teaching
- Liaise with SEN team re. co-teaching
- Co-ordinate the role and responsibilities of the SNA in relation to the needs of students with SEN within the class(es) to which they are assigned
- Liaise with and seek advice from the SEN team when necessary

Learning Support Teacher:

The teacher should:

- Familiarise themselves with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and to meet a variety of need
- Assist in the implementation of a broad range of whole school strategies aimed at prevention and early intervention
- Liaise with mainstream teacher re. co-teaching
- Collaboratively develop Student Support Files , and plans where applicable, for each student selected for school support teaching with class teachers and other staff
- Collaborate and meet with subject teacher to identify priority learning goals for a student in receipt of School Support Plus

- Update and maintain planning and record progress through the use of a Junior Cycle and/or Leaving Certificate Scheme of Work for each group of students or individual (one-to-one) in receipt of school support
- Reflect, evaluate and implement changes to a scheme of work on a termly basis for individual and / or group of students in receipt of school support
- Provide supplementary teaching for literacy and numeracy on a withdrawal and in-class support basis
- Meet with parents regarding any concerns about their child and update them regarding their progress

Special Needs Assistants:

Special Needs Assistants make a valuable contribution to the capacity of the school to provide inclusive education for students with special educational needs. SNA duties are assigned by the principal in accordance with Circular 10/76: "Duties and responsibilities of Principal Teachers" and sanctioned by the Board of Management. Their work should be supervised either by the principal or by a class teacher and states the following:

1. Provide general assistance to the class teacher in aiding students with special care needs (i.e. those sanctioned by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE)) with duties of a non-teaching nature only. *Special Needs Assistants may not act either as substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class. The class teacher is solely responsible for disciplinary, health & safety and classroom management issues and is the main educator of the whole class.*
2. Reflect the proper application of the required criteria as outlined in Circular 07/02.
3. Assist schools in making suitable provision for a student or students with special care needs arising from a disability in an educational context.
4. Assist schools in making suitable provision for a student or students with a disability who may also have a significant medical need for such assistance, a significant impairment of physical or sensory impairment or where their behaviour is such that they are a danger to themselves or to other students.
5. Will be shared by students for whom support has been allocated.

The role of the SNA is that as outlined in circular 0030/2014 and SNA 12/15. The duties of the SNA are carried out according to the guidelines for Special Needs Assistants from the Department of Education and Skills and under the direction of the principal/class teachers, the SNA will meet the care needs of the SEN students to which they have been assigned. (Circular 10/76).

SNAs should:

- Support the needs of students in effectively accessing the curriculum
- Contribute to the quality of care and welfare of the students
- Support learning and teaching in the classroom
- Attend, where possible, training courses/workshops provided by the BOM
- Attend meetings to collaboratively construct 'Personal Profile Plans' and Student Support Plans (School Support Plus) and/or meetings with relevant professionals, when necessary

- Ensure the safety of the SEN students within the school environment
- Maintain a record of support provided to their SEN student
- Accompany SEN student to classes and assist when necessary

In addition to the duties laid out above we also stress the following points:

- In keeping with the NCSE guidelines all work undertaken by the SNA is specifically attached to only those SEN students who have been allocated to them from the school on a needs basis. The SNA may not be asked to act as substitute for an absent teacher or be left in sole charge of a class
- The SNA is privy to confidential information pertaining to SEN students. As such confidentiality is of paramount importance.
- The role of the SNA is pivotal and important in the school. We value the enormous contribution our SNA's make to the school.

Parents/Guardians:

Collaboration and sharing of relevant information between home and school are essential elements of our SEN policy. Parents/Guardians through their unique knowledge of their own children have much to contribute to their child's learning.

The Parent/Guardian should:

- Share any information, reports or reports pending from health professionals, and/or concerns regarding their child's development. Copies of professional reports should be provided to the school at the enrolment stage
- Support the work of the school and keep the subject teacher, Anchor and/or Year Head informed of the progress and challenges they observe in their child's learning
- Attend meetings arranged by the Anchor or SEN team
- Support the targets outlined in their child's support plans and engage in all suggested home-based activities

Parents are encouraged to actively communicate with the school if they observe any learning or related difficulties at home. In all cases where screening, assessment and profiling are conducted, parents are consulted and their permission sought.

Students:

In Loreto College, fostering the student voice is central to its ethos. Students who are in receipt of Learning Support should, as appropriate:

- Be given the opportunity to contribute to the setting of the medium and short-term learning targets
- Become familiar with the targets that have been set for them
- Develop 'ownership' of the skills and strategies that are taught in their Learning Support and / or Resource class and learn to apply these learning strategies and skills to improve their own learning
- Contribute to the evaluation of their progress by participating in appropriate assessment activities, including self-assessment and AFL tasks.

Identifying Students with Additional Needs:

Loreto College use the following procedures for identifying a student with SEN:

- Parents may indicate on the student information section of the enrolment form of special needs that were identified in primary school.
- The Anchor for incoming first years consults with the primary teachers and principals and may visit some feeder primary schools prior to the commencement of first year.
- The Anchor for incoming first years collaborates and consults with the Deputy Principal and Principal of Loreto College who visited all primary schools and may have received pertinent information regarding incoming first years with special educational needs.
- Standardised tests (CAT 4) are administered to all First Years in September and the results of these tests may indicate a need for additional support for some student and opportunities to stretch and challenge students who are exceptionally able. Subject teachers are encouraged to offer extension activities to these specific students if needed in class. We have a 'Loreto Academy' Google Classroom
- The transfer of all students with their primary passport and report cards in 6th class enables the SEN Department to identify students with low Sten Scores.
- A class teacher, form teacher or Year Head can refer any student they are concerned about to the SEN Department.
- A class teacher, form teacher or Year Head can refer any student they believe excels in an area. Referral to CTY Ireland is broached with parental permission.
- When a parent notifies the principal that a student is not benefitting from the regular education programme by the school, a referral system applies whereby the Learning Support Coordinator initiates a process of formal and informal assessment.

Informal assessment may involve all or some of the following:

- Observations from mainstream teachers
- Consultation with subject teachers, parents and students
- Student Journal
- Meeting with student

Formal assessment may involve some of the following:

- Review of Primary Passport and Report Card
- Review of in-house exams and reports
- Behavioural Record if appropriate
- Consultation with Guidance Counsellor
- Administering and interpreting diagnostic tests

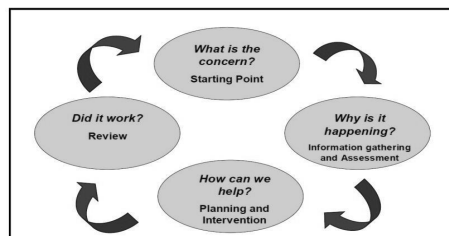
Continuum of Support:

We use the Continuum of Support Framework set out by the Department of Education to identify and support students with additional needs. Like this framework, we recognise that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long-term and that students require different levels of support depending on their identified additional needs. By using this framework, it helps us implement a staged approach to ensure that our support and interventions are

incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support, and are informed by careful monitoring of progress.

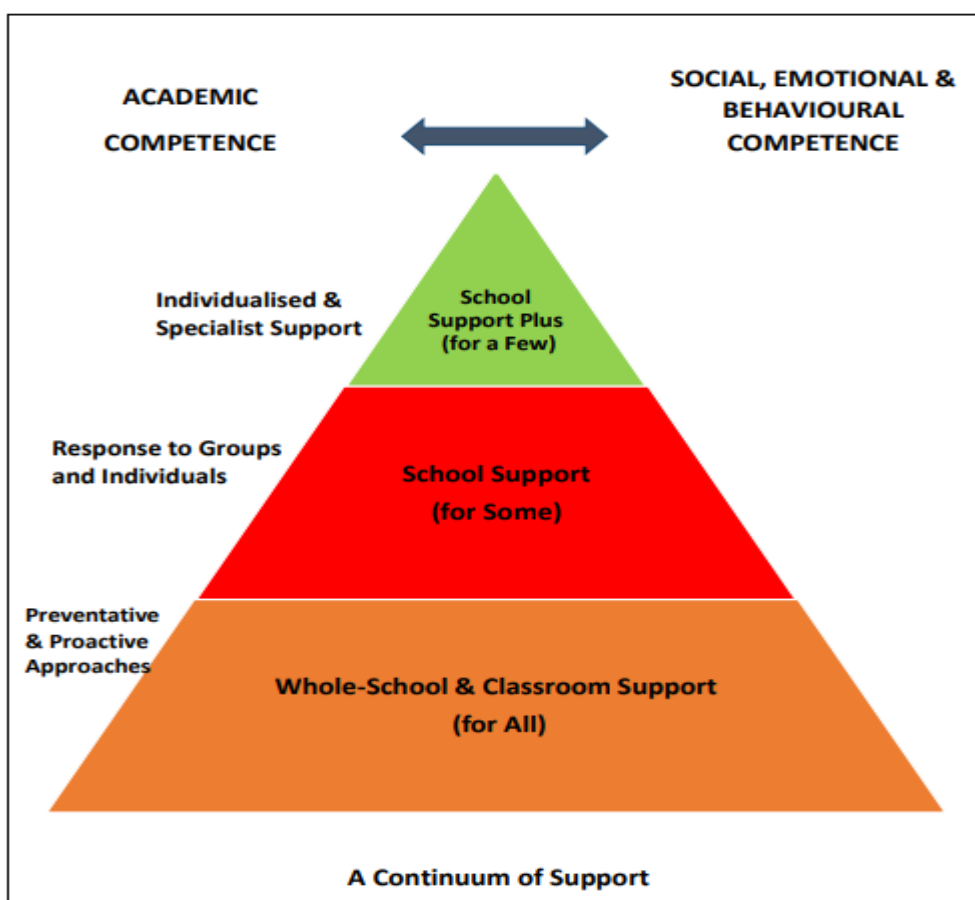
The Continuum of Support is a problem-solving model of assessment and intervention that enables us to gather and analyse data, as well as to plan and review the progress of individual students.

This problem-solving process is illustrated as follows:



Identification of educational needs is central to our policy and the new allocation model. By using the Continuum of Support framework, we can identify students' educational needs, to include academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. This, in turn, allows us to identify and respond to needs in a flexible way while engaging with external agencies as required.

The Continuum of Support suggests the following levels of support:



Whole School & Classroom Support:

Classroom Support is the most common, and typically the first response to emerging needs. It is a response for students who have distinct or individual educational needs and who require approaches to learning and/or behaviour which are **additional to or different** from those required by other students in their class. Problem-solving at this level typically begins when a parent or teacher has concerns about an individual student. The subject teacher considers how to differentiate the learning programme effectively to accommodate the needs of all students in the class. The teacher may discuss the nature of the problem with parents and consider strategies that may be effective. Classroom Support incorporates the simple, informal problem-solving approaches commonly used by subject based teachers to support emerging needs.

School Support:

In some cases, interventions at classroom support level are not enough to fully meet student's special educational needs. Therefore, School Support may be required. The subject teacher needs to involve the Special Educational Needs Team (SEN Team) in the problem-solving process at this point as it involves more systematic gathering of information and the development and monitoring of a School Support Plan. Support at this level can take many forms, for example: team-teaching, small group or individualised tuition, peer mentoring, inclusion in social skills groups, behaviour reward and consequence systems. A Support Plan operates for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.

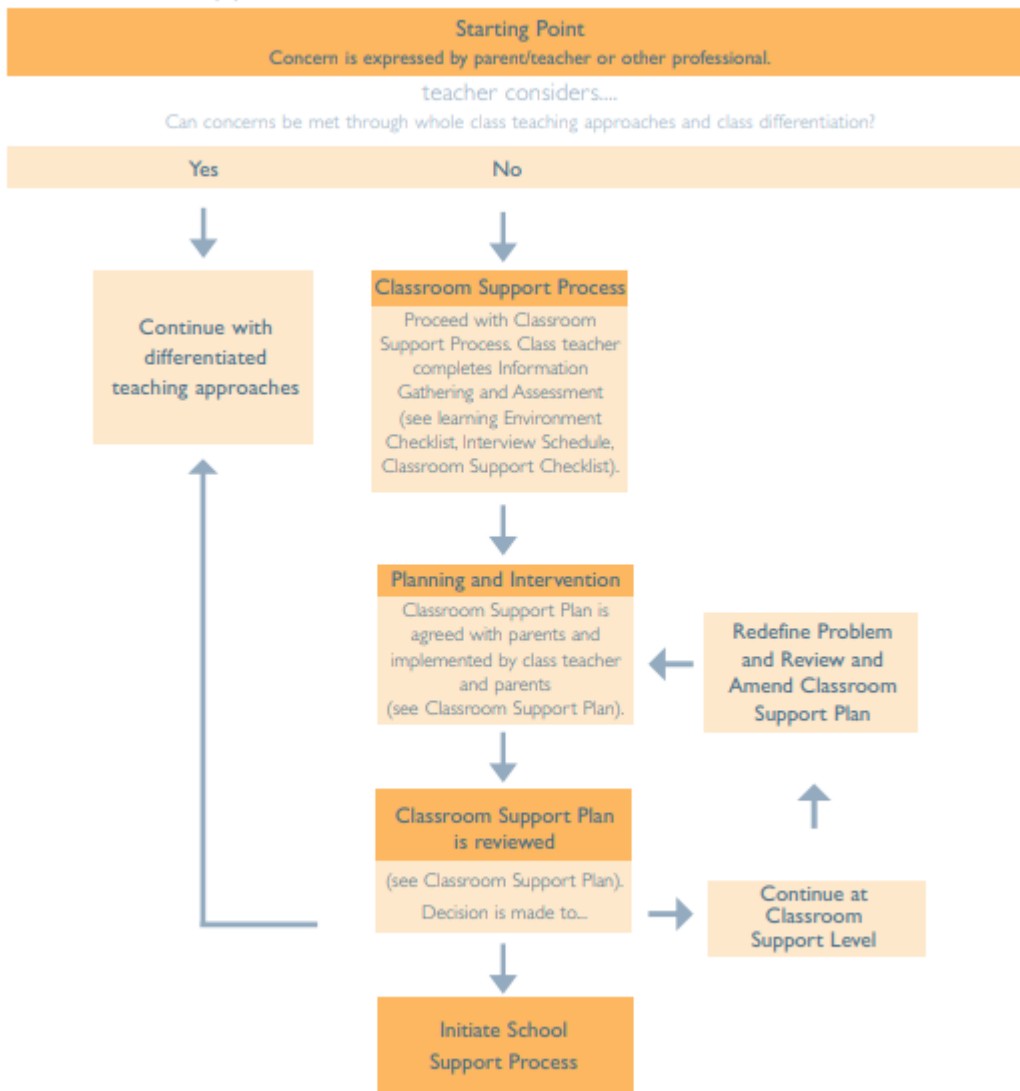
School Support Plus:

If a student's special educational needs are **severe and/or persistent**, they are likely to need intensive support. School Support Plus will generally involve personnel outside the school team in the problem solving, assessment and intervention process. However, the information from Classroom and School Support work will provide the starting point for problem-solving at this level. Classroom support and school support will continue to be an important element of his/her individual education plan.

The flow diagrams below outline how we gather information to identify needs and support students with additional needs. A more comprehensive explanation of each stage can be found in the Continuum of Support for Post Primary Schools- Guidelines for teachers.

<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/Guidelines-for-Post-Primary-Schools-Supporting-Students-with-Special-Educational-Needs-in-Mainstream-Schools.pdf>

Classroom Support Process

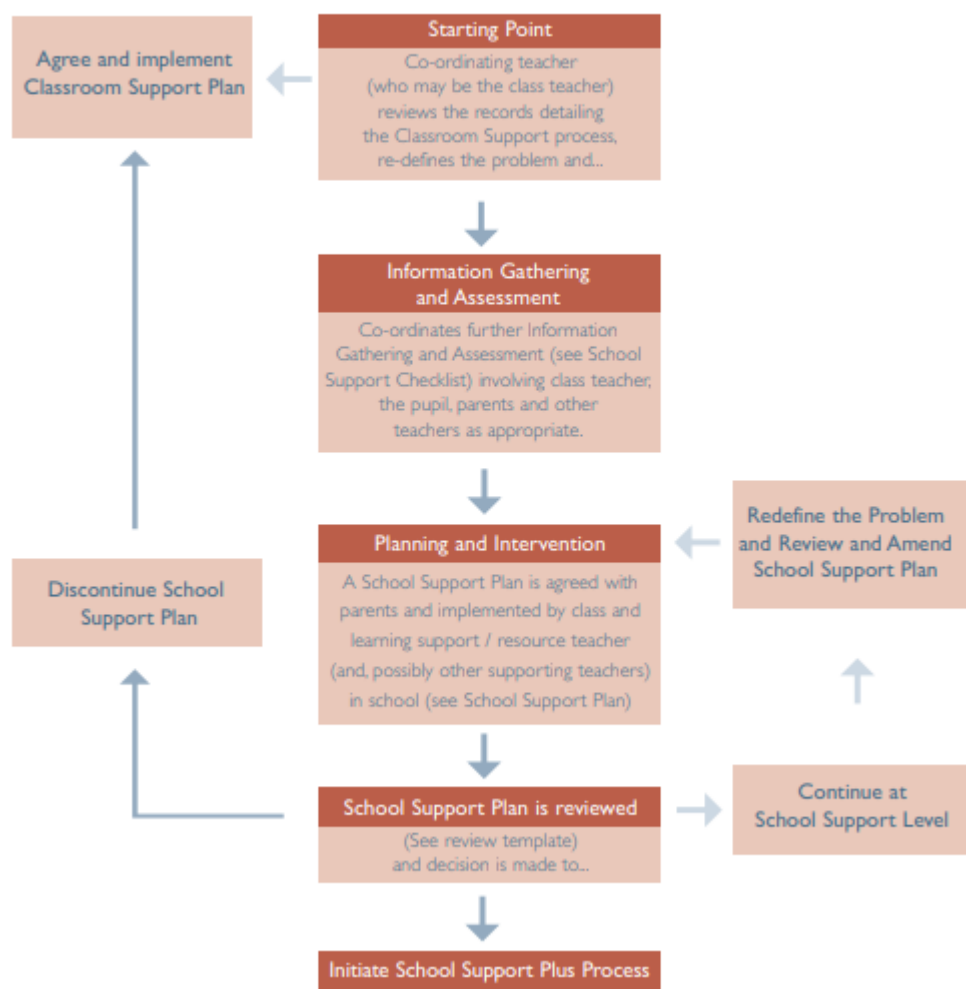


While most pupils' initial needs should be met through classroom based interventions, a small number of pupils may arrive at school with difficulties that are more significant or which are immediately recognised. In such cases, it may be more appropriate to begin with a School Support or School Support Plus Plan. Most of the pupils to whom this applies will be new to the school. However it may also apply for some pupils following an event which impacts significantly on them in school.

*** adapted from NEPS Continuum of Support. For more detailed steps, see page 12-15 of the Continuum of Support-Guidelines for teachers.

https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_special_needs_guidelines.pdf

School Support Process

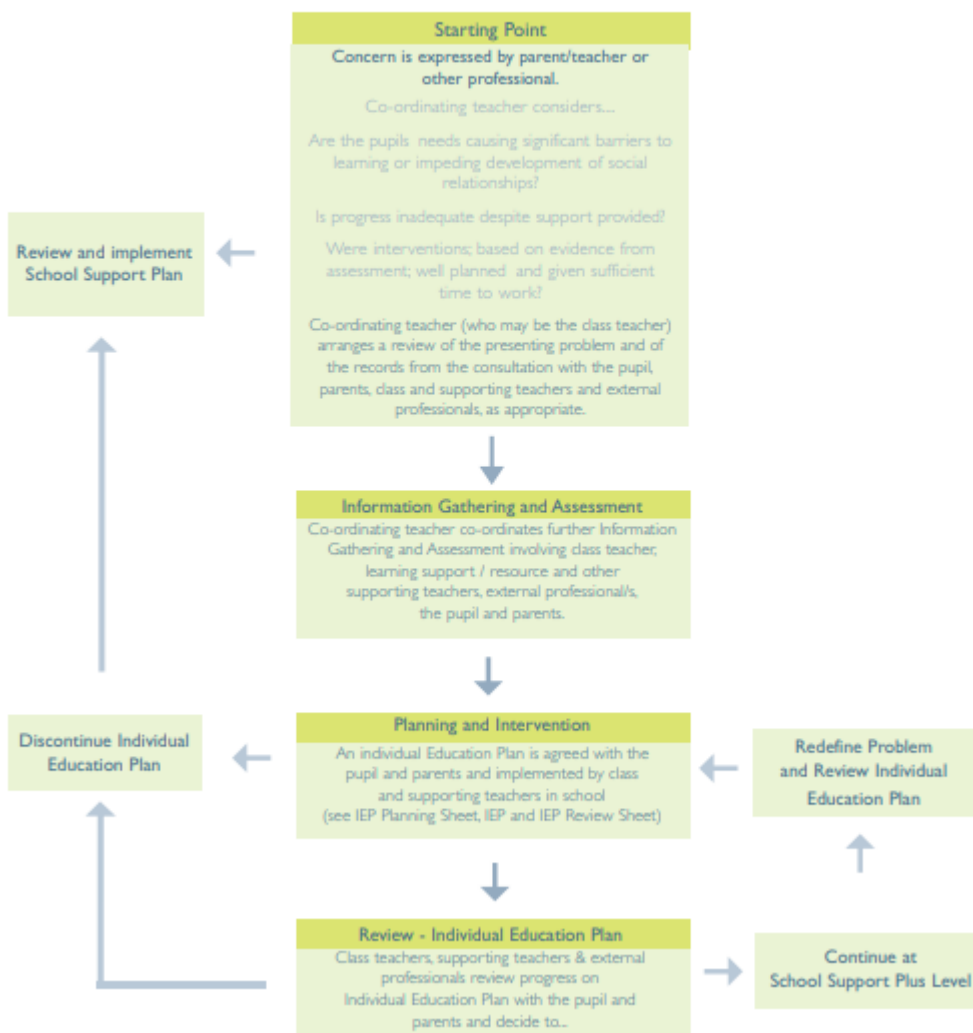


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*** adapted from NEPS Continuum of Support. For more detailed steps, see page 22-25 of the Continuum of Support-Guidelines for teachers.

https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_special_needs_guidelines.pdf

School Support Plus Process



*** adapted from NEPS Continuum of Support. For more detailed steps see page 32-35 of the Continuum of Support-Guidelines for teachers.

https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_special_needs_guidelines.pdf

Information Gathering and Assessment:

Assessment is part of what a subject teacher does on a daily basis for all students. Some methods include self-assessment, questioning, teacher observation, portfolios of work and teacher-designed tasks and tests. The information gathered enables the teacher to plan learning experiences based on the appropriate objectives from the curriculum.

In order to identify students who may require Learning Support, screening; including standardised testing, is carried out annually and further diagnostic testing may need to take place. The information gathered from these formal assessments is then used to inform decisions for support and student's support plans.

Assessment and Screening Tests:

The following assessment procedures are carried out:

- 1st Years-CAT4
- 3rd Years (a cohort of students that meet the criteria (1. Educational Psychological Report on file, 2. In receipt of Learning Support in Junior Cycle, 3. Failed two or more subjects in their 2nd Year Summer Exams) to be assessed in preparation for RACE-WRAT IV, WIAT III)
- 5th Years- WRAT IV, WIAT III
- Additional tests include - New Group Reading Test (NGRT), York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC), Single Word Spelling Test, Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting (DASH), PDST Maths Competency Test, Reading Fluency Tests, NNRIT, Observations and Checklists.

We continually review the assessment and screening tests that we use in order to balance the needs of our students and the need to provide information for appropriate support.

Prevention and Early Intervention Strategies:

Our strategies for preventing learning difficulties include:

- The development of agreed approaches (SSE) to the teaching of Literacy and Numeracy in order to ensure progression and continuity from year to year
- Provision of additional support in language development and any relevant early literacy and mathematical skills to students who need it
- Ongoing structured observation and assessment of literacy and numeracy skills of students
- Close collaboration and consultation between teaching staff and SEN team
- Promotion of literacy e.g. Print-rich environment, DEAR (Drop Everything and Read), Spell, Write, Right (Sept 2019), and the NCSE VEP - Vocabulary Enrichment Programme (Spring 2021).
- Promotion of Numeracy e.g. Maths for Fun, Numeracy Ninjas.
- Parental involvement in promoting literacy and numeracy e.g. Homework Policy Guidelines for Parents
- Differentiation - adapting the learning environment
- In-class support from the SEN team
- Team-Teaching/Co-Teaching
- Withdrawing individuals/groups

Meeting the Needs and Allocating Resources:

Once students' needs have been identified, Special Education Teachers (SET) are deployed to address these needs as required. We deploy SETs in a variety of ways in order to effectively meet students' needs. We aim to strike a balance between in-class support, group and individual support while ensuring that the needs of students with additional needs are met inclusively.

Importantly, the level and type of support reflect the specific targets of individual students as set out in their support plans and are informed by careful monitoring and review of progress. In this way, following a period of intervention, some students may

no longer require additional teaching support; some may require the same level, while others may require more intensive supports.

In planning the allocation of additional teaching supports, the overriding principle is that resources are deployed to address the identified needs of students. Importantly, those with **the highest level of need should have access to the greatest level of support**. We consider methodologies best suited to promoting meaningful inclusion such as differentiation, heterogeneous grouping, team-teaching and small group teaching. In addition to literacy and numeracy difficulties, many students will have specific needs in such areas as oral language, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development, motor skills and application to learning.

At the end of each term the SEN Anchors meet subject based teachers and review student's needs, the resources in place and progress made using the Continuum of Support problem-solving model of assessment and stage approach flow charts.

We cross-reference the needs of students at School Support and School Support Plus levels and consider common needs that can be met by grouping, to ensure effective and efficient teaching and learning approaches.

Timetabling:

When drawing up timetables it is important to remember that:

- timetables should be continually reviewed
- interruptions to classes/classrooms should be kept to a minimum.

Irish Exemptions & Special Tuition

For the vast majority of our students, those who are eligible to receive an Irish exemption will have been granted one by their primary school. At the time of enrolment in Loreto College Mullingar, the *Certificate of Exemption* should be given to the school when completing the enrolment process.

The Department of Education, in its *Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools*, clearly states that all students must study Mathematics, Irish and English while in secondary school. In general, exemptions from the study of Irish should be applied for in Primary School.

There are very limited circumstances under which a student can be exempted from the study of Irish and these circumstances are outlined in DES Circular 0054/ 2022. <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/f33d5-exemptions-from-the-study-of-irish-post-primar-yocosgrocograooooo>

The circular identifies that there are exceptional circumstances in which an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted. Section 2.2 of the circular states:

"Exemption from the study of Irish may be allowed in the following exceptional circumstances only:

2.2.1. A pupil moving from a different country without previous experience of learning the Irish language.

or

2.2.2. *A pupil who experiences significant literacy difficulties which are an obstacle to their learning across the curriculum.*

or

2.2.3. *A pupil who experiences a high level of persistent needs that are a significant barrier to the pupil's participation and engagement in their learning and school life.*

or

2.2.4. *A pupil in a recognised special school or class or who was previously enrolled in a recognised special school or class or who has a recommendation and has been deemed eligible for a place in a recognised special school and/or in a special class in a mainstream school.*

or

2.2.5. *A pupil whose parent(s)/guardian(s) is a/are diplomatic or consular representative(s) of another country to Ireland irrespective of age or educational history.*

Prior to making an application, you are advised to speak with one of our Guidance Counsellors so that you are fully aware of the implications of an exemption from the study of Irish for the student while in post-primary school and into the future. We also advise you to speak with the SEN anchor/SEN Co-ordinator so that you are aware of your child's standardised score in a discrete test as outlined in 2.2.2. above (if applying under this criteria).

When the process is complete, the school Principal will write to the applicant to inform them of the outcome. Where the exemption is granted, a Certificate of Exemption will be issued. Where an application is unsuccessful, this will be confirmed to the applicant in writing within 21 school days of receipt of the application. The applicant will be informed that the school's decision can be appealed to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 calendar days from the date the decision of the school was notified to the parent(s)/ guardian(s)/ student.

Once Student's needs have been identified, Special Education Teachers (SET) are deployed to address these needs as required. We deploy SETs in a variety of ways in order to effectively meet students' needs. We aim to strike a balance in both Junior and Senior Cycle between in-class support, group and individual support while ensuring that the needs of students with additional needs are met inclusively.

The level and types of support are informed by careful monitoring of each student's progress in subjects. In Junior Cycle, students who have an Irish Exemption as a result of a learning/language difficulty will be provided with Special Tuition lessons in lieu of Irish. In Senior Cycle, support in the form of Special Tuition will be provided (depending on resources and timetabling) for students who drop a subject or who are exempt from specific subjects. This model of intervention is based on the premise that **those with the highest level of need should have access to the greatest level of support.**

Tracking, recording and reviewing progress:

Provision for students with special educational needs is enhanced through clear identification processes and careful planning of interventions to address academic and/or personal and social development needs. Identification of needs, planning,

target-setting and monitoring of outcomes are essential elements of an integrated and collaborative problem-solving process.

Student Support File:

We use a Student Support File to plan interventions and to track a student's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates us in documenting progress and needs over time and assists us in providing an appropriate level of support to students, in line with their level of need. Our Student Support File is based on the NEPS template and is stored on the school server. All support files should include:

- Cover sheet with student's details
- A timeline of actions
- Record of support received
- Standardised/ Diagnostic test scores
- Support plans (See below)
- Checklists

The year group Anchor should open a Student Support File once a student is placed on Whole School & Classroom Support on the continuum. This is kept in the class teacher's assessment folder and then placed in the SEN filing cabinet stored in B10 at the end of the academic year.

If, after a number of reviews, the child's case is moved to School Support, it is the responsibility of the Anchor and the allocated Learning Support Teacher to access and update the information in the Student Support File. The same system is in place for children on School Support Plus.

Supports & Plans:

We support students in our school across the three stages of support on the Continuum of Support.

Classroom Support:

The subject based Teacher plans for each of their students' additional educational needs and considers their actions, including individualised teaching and management approaches, which will be taken to meet the student's needs.

School Support:

A Support Plan is a **Group or Individual Profile and Learning Programme (GPLP/IPLP)**. This plan is drawn up by the Learning Support teacher in collaboration with the SEN Anchor. It will set out the nature of the student's learning difficulties, define specific teaching, learning and behavioural targets and set a timescale for review. The plan should, for the most part, be implemented within the normal classroom setting (team teaching) and complemented by focused school based intervention programmes. Depending on the nature of the needs and on the school context, additional teaching might be within a small group or individual or a combination of both either in class or on a withdrawal basis. Home-based actions may also be included. After the plan has been drawn up, it should become a working document through the careful monitoring of the student's response to the actions taken.

School Support Plus:

A Support Plan is an individual **Student Support Plan**. This plan is drawn up by the SEN Anchor and Learning Support teacher, in consultation with the student's parents/guardians, professionals external to the school and (if appropriate) the student based on the information gathered. It will set out;

- The nature and degree of the student's abilities, skills and talents
- The nature and degree of the student's special educational needs and how those needs affect his/her educational development
- The present level of educational performance of the student
- The special educational needs of the student
- The special education and related support services to be provided to the student to enable the student to benefit from including:
 - Strategies for supporting the student's progress and inclusion in the classroom setting
 - Individual and/or small group/special class interventions/programmes
 - Specific methodologies/programmes to be implemented
 - Specific equipment/materials and/or IT supports, if required to support learning and access to the curriculum
 - Support required from a Special Needs Assistant (SNA), if appropriate
 - The goals which the student is to achieve over a period not exceeding 12 months
 - The student's priority learning needs, long and short term targets to be achieved, the monitoring and review arrangements to be put in place

SSP meetings are coordinated by an SET, usually the student's Anchor. Parents will be invited to relevant meetings depending on the needs of the student.

Individual SEN Files:

All students' SEN files are stored in a locked filing cabinet in the SEN Office. It is the responsibility of SETs to update and manage the files of the students on school support and school support plus that they support. It is the responsibility of the SEN Anchor and the subject based teacher to update and manage the SEN files of student's on classroom support, the Anchor & SET teacher to update and manage the SEN files of student's on school support and the Anchor, SET teacher, SNA, parents and external agencies to contribute to the school support plus plan and the responsibility of the Anchor to update and manage same. The following should be stored

- Student Support File
- Psychological Report
- Copy of referrals made to outside agencies
- Copy of reports from outside agencies
- Record of SEN meetings with parents, outside agencies and inter- school meetings (Vsware SEN tab)
- Record of SEN correspondence between parents, outside agencies and school staff (Vsware SEN tab)

Communication between SET Team/Principal/Class Teachers:

SET timetables have been organised so that there is a weekly meeting time of 40 minutes. This is an opportunity for SEN Anchors to consult, plan, review and discuss pertinent issues surrounding students on their caseload. In order to make effective use of this time, a SEN calendar is drawn up at the beginning of the year.

Health and Safety Issues:

Every staff member and student is entitled to a safe, secure environment and to be treated with due respect. All appropriate measures are taken to ensure the safety of each student with SEN. When a place is offered to a student with SEN, every effort will be made to ensure that the supports to which the student is entitled are in place as soon as possible. Staff members will be informed of any potential risks and, where necessary, individual plans will be drawn up and implemented.

Supervision/Child Protection:

- Where students receive support on a one-to-one basis, the SET teacher is responsible for ensuring that both themselves and the student are visible through the glass panel in the door.
- Where there is no glass panel, the door of the room should remain open.
- Where students are withdrawn for support, the SET teacher in conjunction with the Deputy Principal should arrange an appropriate classroom where resources if needed are made available.
- Where a student has access to an SNA, they may withdraw the student from the class if a plan is in place with the class teacher.

Ratification and Communication

This revised policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 7th of February, 2023 .

Implementation and Review

This policy will be implemented from [Date]. It will be reviewed in February 2025 by the Special Education Team and staff of Loreto College .

Signed: *Hard copy signed by Ms Lordan Shaw, Chairperson of the BOM*

Date: February 2023

