

**St. Sinneach's National School**

**Colehill**

**Co. Longford**

**Uimhir Rolla 14672 F**

**Special Educational Needs Policy**

**Introductory Statement:** This policy was drawn up by the principal, class teachers and Special Education teachers of St. Sinneach's N.S., Colehill, in February 2022.

The purpose of this policy is:

- to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and interested persons on the provision of effective Learning Support to pupils with special educational needs. (Refer to Appendix 2: Responding to Children with Special Educational Needs);
- to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act 1998, Equal Status Act 2000, Education Welfare Act 2000 and Education for Persons with Disabilities Act 2004;
- to enable children with special educational needs to join in the normal activities of the school along with other children.

The school aims to meet the needs of any child whom the parent wishes to register at the school as long as a place is available and the admission criteria are fulfilled. In the best interests of the child, parents should inform the school of their child's special needs as soon as possible, in order that Special Needs Assistant be applied for, sanctioned and appointed and/or physical resources (e.g hoist) be put in place in advance of the child starting school.

**Description of the School:** St. Sinneach's N.S., Colehill, is a rural school with a current enrolment of 109 pupils under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise. It is a mainstream primary school. It is a single storey building with ramps; the building is wheel-chair accessible. There are five classrooms, two SET rooms. There is also a general purpose room, a staffroom, Principal's office and small meeting room. There are five class teachers, one full-time and one part-time Special Education teacher.

**Belief Statement:** All of our children have a right to an education, which is appropriate to them as individuals. We want all our children to feel that they are a valued part of our school community. As far as possible, it is our aim to minimise the difficulties that children may experience. We are dedicated to helping each child to achieve his/her individual potential. The provision of a quality system of Learning Support and an inclusive curriculum is integral to this commitment. We take into account the different backgrounds, experiences, interests and strengths that influence the way in which children learn when we plan our approaches to teaching and learning throughout the school.

**Aims:** Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

- Optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy, before leaving St. Sinneach's N.S.;
- Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning;
- Enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners;
- Establish early intervention to enhance learning and prevent/reduce difficulties in learning;
- Enhance basic skills and learning strategies to a level which enables pupils to participate in the full curriculum;
- Expose children to stimulating learning experiences so that reading and writing are enjoyed and valued;
- Develop a partnership with parents/guardians in order that their knowledge, views and experience can assist us in assessing and providing for their children;
- Take into account the ascertainable wishes of the children concerned and, whenever possible, directly involve them in decision making in order to provide more effectively for them;
- Inform and include parents of children who are receiving support teaching of the aims and implementation of the Continuum of Support;
- Promote cooperation among class and Special Education teachers in the implementation of the Special Educational Needs policy;
- Ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities towards children with special educational needs and are able to exercise them;

- Ensure that **all** children, regardless of their ability, are included and are part of all activities and are part of the school community in St. Sinneach's N.S.
- Monitor our effectiveness in achieving the above aims.

### **CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT**

The needs of pupils with special educational needs can best be considered in terms of a continuum and therefore support given is also on the basis of a continuum. The levels of support are as follows:

**Classroom Support:** Classroom Support is the most common, and typically the first response to emerging needs. It is a response for pupils 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 pupils in their class. Problem solving at this level typically begins when a parent or teacher has concerns about an individual pupil. The class teacher and parents discuss the nature of the problem and consider strategies which may be effective. Classroom Support, through differentiation, incorporates the simple, informal problem-solving approaches commonly used by class teachers to support emerging needs.

**School Support:** In some cases, interventions at classroom support level are not enough to fully meet the pupil's special educational needs. School Support may, therefore, be required. The class teacher needs to involve the Special Education teachers in the problem-solving process at this point and it involves more systematic gathering of information and the development and monitoring of a School Support Plan for that child.

**School Support Plus:** If a pupil'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 Support 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.

## **STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

In attempting to achieve the above aims, the Board of Management, principal and staff will take all reasonable steps, within the limits of the resources available, to fulfil the requirements outlined in this policy document and the Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support – Guidelines for Teachers (DES 2007) publication.

**Board of Management:** The Board of Management will fulfil its statutory duties towards pupils with special educational needs. It will ensure that the provision required is an integral part of the school development plan. Members will be knowledgeable about the school's special educational needs provision - funding, equipment and personnel.

The role and responsibilities of staff members vary depending on the level of support that the child is receiving and on what stage of the Continuum of Support the child is currently.

## **CLASSROOM SUPPORT**

**The Class Teacher:** The class teacher liaises with the parents regarding the decision to initiate the Classroom Support process. Good practice would suggest that the class teacher will generally act as co-ordinator throughout the problem solving process in consultation with the pupil and his/her parents. The class teacher may also seek advice from the Special Education teacher in the school and will keep the principal informed. He or she should maintain a record of relevant information which will be used should more detailed problem solving be required at School Support level. (See Appendix 1 for Template)

**The Special Education teacher:** The role of the Special Education teacher is to provide advice and resources to the class teacher which will assist him/her in the assessment process and in the development of classroom and, where appropriate, home based interventions for the pupil.

**The Principal:** The principal's role, as Special Education teacher, is to be aware and to note the fact that a Classroom Support process is being put in place.

**Other professionals:** Other professionals such as Educational Psychologists, Speech and

Language Therapists, Visiting Teachers etc. may be involved indirectly, offering consultation or advice in relation to appropriate approaches for pupils presenting with early difficulties. In addition, work on the development of whole school policies, practices and initiatives to support all pupils with special educational needs in partnership with N.E.P.S., D.E.S. staff and other outside agencies can support interventions at this stage.

## **SCHOOL SUPPORT**

**The Class Teacher:** The class teacher consults with the Special Education teacher, principal and pupil's parents about initiating the School Support process. The class teacher contributes to the problem solving process and remains responsible for working with the pupil in the classroom, providing/ensuring classroom supports as agreed in the School Support Plan.

**The Special Education teacher / The Principal:** Having spoken with the parents / guardians, the principal as Special Education teacher, starts the process of implementing a School Support Plan. A file will be maintained containing records in relation to assessment, intervention and reviews (from both the classroom support and school support levels). The Special Education teacher is usually involved in the problem solving process or in providing additional support to the pupil.

**Other Professionals:** Other professionals such as Educational Psychologists, Clinical Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Visiting Teachers etc. may provide a consultation service to teachers. They may also give advice in relation to appropriate assessment and intervention approaches for particular pupils without necessarily working directly with the pupil. Parental consent should be sought where discussions occur about an individual named pupil. The appropriateness of involvement and availability of the professional in question should be discussed with the professional in the first instance. Advice on the development of whole school policies, practice and initiatives in relation to the provision and development of intensive early intervention programmes for pupils with similar needs can also be initiated and/or supported by external professionals and agencies.

## **SCHOOL SUPPORT PLUS**

**The Class Teacher:** The class teacher contributes to assessment and planning and remains responsible for working with the pupil in the classroom and providing /ensuring classroom supports.

**The Special Education teacher / The Principal:** Once the process is initiated, the Special Education teacher takes on the lead responsibility for the School Support Plus process. This will normally involve:

- Reviewing the outcomes of interventions detailed in the Classroom and School Support Plans.
- Co-ordinating the assessment of the pupil's learning/social, emotional and behavioural difficulty and identification of special educational needs involving, as appropriate, and with parental consent, relevant external agencies in the process.
- Coordinating the development of the pupil's Support Plan - Monitoring and supporting interventions, reviewing targets and creating new targets, working alongside the class teacher, external professionals and involving the pupil's parents.
- Liaising with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENO) as appropriate.

Special Education teachers will usually be involved in both the assessment and intervention process. They may provide additional support either on a withdrawal basis or through in-class support.

**Other Professionals:** Other professionals such as Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists and Visiting Teachers may be involved in providing advice through a range of direct and indirect assessment approaches and in providing support to individual pupils and/or their teachers, including contributing to intervention plans for individual pupils.

**Role of the Pupil:** The role of the pupil will be to:

- Cooperate fully with all school personnel engaged in the delivery of an educational

programme.

- The development, implementation, assessment and review of their own learning.

## **EARLY INTERVENTION**

We believe it is very important to identify and assess children with additional needs as early as possible so that effective measures can be put in place. Early intervention falls under the remit of a Classroom Support Plan on the Continuum of Support and would involve:

- Class-based early intervention by the class teacher through differentiation (the provision of additional individualised support).
- Ongoing teacher observation and assessment.

The triggers for intervention at this point could be:

- The child makes little or no progress when teaching approaches are directed at an identified area of weakness.
- The child shows signs of difficulty in developing literacy and numeracy skills, which result in poor attainment.
- Persistent emotional or behavioural difficulties which do not respond to behaviour management techniques used by the school and this affects their development of basic numeracy and literacy skills.
- Has a sensory or physical difficulty that affects their development of numeracy and literacy skills.
- Has communication and/or relationship difficulties and this affects their access to the curriculum and the development of numeracy and literacy skills.

The Special Education teacher operates an 'Early Intervention' programme for Senior Infants pupils who have been identified by the class teacher as struggling with literacy and have been moved to a Student Support Plan. They come out of class for supplementary English teaching. The emphasis is on oral language, print awareness, print conventions, phonological awareness, letter identification and knowledge of letter sounds, visual discrimination, and word identification skills, understanding of word meanings/sentences, spelling CVC words, sight vocabulary and basic sentence writing.

After Easter, the Special Education teacher operates an 'Early Intervention' programme for the Junior Infants who have been identified by the class teacher as struggling with literacy and have been moved to a Student Support Plan. They come out of class for supplementary English teaching. The emphasis is on oral language, letter identification, letter formation, developing visual skills, developing auditory skills and developing early writing skills.

Refer to Appendix 3: Identifying and Selecting Pupils for Supplementary Teaching.

**Complaints:** If parents/guardians have a complaint about the special educational provision made, then they should in the first instance make an appointment to speak to the Special Education teacher. The complaint will be investigated and dealt with as early as possible. If the matter is not resolved to the parents'/guardians' satisfaction, then the matter proceeds to the Board of Management.

**Refusal by Parent:** In the case where support is recommended for a child by the class teacher and where the parent does not consent to the child having the additional support, records of all meetings with the parent are retained and if possible, the parent will be requested to write a letter stating their wishes for the child not to receive additional support.

**Provision of Resources:** Resources for the provision of Learning Support include a variety of textbooks, reading books, library books, games and ancillary materials and oral language materials. A variety of testing materials are also used including standardised, diagnostic, screening, non-reading intelligence, reading attainment, phonological awareness and maths attainment tests.

Learning Support resources will primarily be used in the Special Education teacher's room. These resources are also available to class teachers following consultation with the Special Education teacher.

**Covid Learning and Support Scheme:** There will be additional tuition and support provided throughout the year for pupils whose learning and emotional development were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.



**Timetabling:** The provision of Learning Support includes withdrawal of pupils from their classroom and where appropriate and beneficial, in-class support.

Efforts are made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curricular areas each time they attend learning support. A flexible approach to timetabling is adopted by class teachers while class disruption is minimised and children will be taken through work they have missed.

**Monitoring and Reviewing:** This policy was reviewed in 2022 and will be reviewed at least every two years from that date. The Board of Management and the principal will ensure the special needs provision is an integral part of the school development plan.

Through the school-wide implementation of this policy, we aim to enhance pupils' learning in the following ways:

- Improved Standards of Academic Achievement.
- Enabling of the discontinuation of the provision of Learning Support based on positive assessment results.
- Enhanced parental involvement in supporting their child's learning needs.

**Ratification and Communication:** This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Sinneach's N.S., Colehill, at a meeting on 4th April, 2022. Parents may obtain a copy of this policy from the school and the policy is available to be viewed at the school.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Fr. Charlie Healy, Chairperson, Board of Management.

