



SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS / LEARNING SUPPORT POLICY

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1. Situation

Leighlinbridge National School is a mixed, vertical school with 184 pupils enrolled on 30th September 2006. It is situated in the village of Leighlinbridge and the pupils come from a mixed urban/rural background (the village and the surrounding area). In the school at present there are seven classroom teachers, two special education teachers and the Principal.

2. Philosophy

As outlined in the enrolment policy, the school complies with relevant legislation regarding the enrolment of children including those with special needs and endeavours to optimise the learning opportunities of all pupils.

3. Aims

The principal aim of learning support is 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 the school.

We also aim

- to enable these pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level;
- to develop their self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning;
- to provide supplementary teaching and additional support and resources for these pupils;
- to involve parents in supporting their children's learning through effective programmes;
- to promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of the whole-school policies on learning support for these pupils;
- to establish early intervention programmes and other programmes designed to enhance learning and to prevent or reduce difficulties in learning.



4. Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management

The Board oversees the development, implementation and review of school policy on learning support and special needs. It ensures that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided. It provides a secure facility for storage of records relating to pupils in receipt of special needs and learning support services.

Principal

The principal ensures that the teachers and parents of pupils are enabled to fulfil their roles as outlined in this plan. The principal also

- has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of policy;
- works with teachers and parents in the development of the plan for special needs and learning support;
- monitors the implementation of the plan on an ongoing basis;
- monitors the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on pupils with very low achievement;
- helps teachers to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of learning support and special needs education;
- oversees the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils in need so they can be provided with support;
- keeps teachers informed about external assessment services that are available;
- identifies a teacher (currently Special Duties Post 2) to perform the role of co-ordinator of learning support and special needs services.

Co-ordinator of Learning Support/Special Needs Services

At present this role is performed by the teacher undertaking Special Duties Post 2. The co-ordinator

- maintains a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and/or special education services;
- co-ordinates the caseloads/workloads of the learning support and resource teachers;
- implements a tracking system at whole-school level to monitor the progress of children with learning difficulties;
- advises parents of pupils with learning difficulties;
- liaises with outside agencies to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs;
- arranges for classroom accommodation and resources, as appropriate.

Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching. A particular responsibility is to create a classroom environment in which learning difficulties can be prevented or at least alleviated.

The class teacher also

- initially advises parents of pupils with learning difficulties;
- implements the school policy on screening and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching
- collaborates with the learning support and resource teachers in the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for those pupils assessed as having a special educational need;
- for each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, adjusts the class programme in so far as is practicable;



Learning Support Teacher

The Learning Support Teacher works closely with class teachers to implement school policies on learning support. The learning support teacher

- consults with individual class teachers on a regular basis;
- consults with the school staff as a group at least once a year;
- meets with the parent of each pupil who has been selected in regard to diagnostic assessment;
- communicates as necessary with parents of pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching;
- co-ordinates the administration of the whole-school screening programme;
- carries out a diagnostic assessment of each pupil who has been identified as experiencing low achievement;
- provides supplementary teaching for relevant pupils;
- devises and implements an early intervention programme for the school;
- maintains a record of attendance of pupils at supplementary teaching sessions;
- completes a regular record of progress

Resource Teacher

The Resource Teacher provides support for children with special educational needs arising from a disability by

- assessing and recording child needs and progress;
- providing supplementary teaching for these children;
- advising class teachers in regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, suitable textbooks, etc;
- meeting and advising parents, in conjunction with class teacher when necessary;
- meeting with other relevant professionals

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

Special Needs Assistants are recruited specifically to assist the school in providing the necessary non-teaching services to pupils with assessed educational needs. Their duties involve tasks of a non-teaching nature such as

- Preparation and tidying up of classrooms;
- Assisting school children to board and alight from school buses. Where necessary travel as escort during school hours on school buses may be required;
- Special assistance as necessary for children with particular difficulties e.g. helping special needs pupils with typing or writing or computers or other use of equipment;
- Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene and being mindful of health and safety needs of the pupil;
- Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks, examinations and similar activities;
- Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreation and dispersal from the classroom for one reason or another;
- Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom for one reason or another;
- General assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the Principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature. (SNAs may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances will they be left in sole charge of a class or group of children);
- Participation with school development planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school development process;
- Engagement with parents of special needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by school management;
- Other duties appropriate to the grade as may be determined by the needs of the pupils and the school from time to time.



5. Prevention Strategies & Parental Involvement

The school recognises the importance of oral language in relation to literacy development. The Chatterbox Programme for oral language is used in each class ensuring continuity and progression from class to class. The Letterland approach to phonics is used in the infant classes in conjunction with the Sounds at Work books. The Streets Ahead reading scheme is used in the school, typically with children from 4th-6th classes also using a class novel. The school takes part in the Setanta and Puffin Book Clubs giving children a chance to buy books for personal reading and ensuring that class libraries are well stocked with interesting and up-to-date material.

The children are encouraged to borrow books from their class library on a weekly basis. Parents of children who are experiencing difficulties in reading are encouraged to take part in shared reading programmes with their child.

Early Intervention Strategies

The Learning Support Teacher works with the Junior Infant teacher to implement a plan for language development and early mathematical skills. These programmes are set within a time frame of a school term.

The parents of children in the junior infant class are given the opportunity to borrow books at a suitable level to share with their children.

Children in Senior Infants who are experiencing difficulties in literacy and numeracy are offered learning support in a small-group setting.

6. Assessment and Reporting

Identification of Children Needing Supplementary Teaching

The school will typically identify pupils who would benefit from supplementary teaching by using the results of the most recently administered standardised tests. This will be done in consultation with the class teachers and parents. This is the case particularly for children who have not reached an age where standardised testing is available.

In Leighlinbridge N.S., having regard to the needs of the pupils and the resources available, we provide support for pupils in the following order of priority:

1. Pupils who have been psychologically assessed and who have been found to have a Learning Disability which is covered by the D.E.S. General Allocation Model.
2. Pupils for whom English is not their first language and have little or no competence or confidence in using the language.
3. Pupils at or below the 20th percentile in English.
4. Early intervention in English (see above "Early Intervention Strategies").
5. Pupils at or below the 20th percentile in Maths.
6. Early intervention in Maths.
7. Additional Support:

If resources are available it may on occasion be possible to provide support for pupils in addition to those supported in steps 1 – 5. These pupils will be identified by the class teacher in conjunction with a member of the Special Educational Needs Team. Factors which will determine the level of support available include the judgement of the Class Teacher (see "Input from the Class Teacher" below), cooperation of the pupils' parents, the number of pupils from each class grouping needing additional support and the receptiveness of the pupil to such support.



Preliminary Screening

A first step in identifying pupils who may need learning support is for one or more screening measures to be administered. The screening measures that are administered will depend on the age and stage of development of the pupils concerned. The M.I.S.T. is administered typically after a child has completed 5 terms in school. The Drumcondra Reading Test is administered to all classes (1st – 6th) during the month of May. Following those tests we use the criteria detailed above to inform our selection of pupils for learning support. The Drumcondra Maths Test is also administered in a similar manner.

Input from the Class Teacher

The judgement of the class teacher is an important factor for assessment. The class teacher will be in a position to confirm whether or not the score achieved by a pupil on a screening measure is an accurate reflection of the pupil's performance in class. The class teacher will also be able to contribute to the planning of each pupil selected for supplementary teaching by providing information about the pupil's strengths and weaknesses.

Input From Parents

Once a pupil has come to the attention of the school because of low achievement or learning difficulties it will be possible for the class teacher to inform the parents and to:

- Ascertain the parents' views about the child's performance at school;
- Outline the support that is available to their child in the school;

A meeting between the parents and the learning-support teacher will take place in order to discuss their child's progress. The parents can contribute to the development and implementation of a planning programme by discussing the learning targets for their child and by identifying activities that can be implemented at home to support the work of the school.

Diagnostic Assessment

We currently use the Neale Analysis Test of Reading Ability for children aged 7 and older. The Quest test is also used. In Maths we use the NCCA draft guidelines for general learning disabilities checklist and Prim-Ed Maths Assessment. The objectives of the diagnostic assessment conducted by the learning-support teacher are:

- To identify those aspects of English and/or Mathematics in which the pupil has either particular strengths or learning difficulties;
- To identify the pupil's learning needs;
- To generate information essential for the completion of a planning programme;
- Identify in consultation with the pupil's class teacher, the appropriate level and duration of learning support.

7. Supplementary Teaching

Supplementary teaching may take the form of withdrawal from class or in-class support from the Learning Support Teacher. When a pupil is withdrawn from class it will typically be in a small group setting in the Learning Support Rooms. To help with the organisation of learning support groups at the beginning of each school year the Class Teacher will receive a questionnaire to provide information for the Learning Support Team such as:

- Numbers of pupils with difficulties in a particular class or room;
- The nature of these difficulties (e.g. language, literacy, numeracy difficulties);
- Pupils with Emotional/Behavioural Disorder;
- The type of support expected by the teacher;
- Which model of support would be most suitable for particular children;



The role of Learning Support / Resource Teacher / SNAs in providing this support;
Suggestions for improvement of special needs provision in the school;
Any further comments

Parents or guardians of children who are selected to receive supplementary teaching will be required to sign a form (see end of policy) giving their consent. If parents or guardians wish to refuse they are required to sign a form indicating their refusal (see end of policy).

Children who are receiving supplementary teaching by being withdrawn from class will be collected by the Learning Support / Resource Teacher.

Learning Support and Resource Teachers will liaise with Class Teachers on a regular basis to review pupils' progress.

Continuing / Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching

The progress of pupils receiving supplementary teaching will be kept under constant review and continuation or discontinuation of such teaching will be made following consultation between a member of the Learning Support Team and the Class Teacher and parent/guardian.

8. Monitoring Progress

The principal teacher, learning support teacher and resource teacher meet once a term to examine specific aspects of the school plan. At these meetings the following issues are addressed:

- Development and implementation of the school's early intervention programmes.
- Implementation of the school's screening programme for the selection of pupils for diagnostic assessment.
- Progress of pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching.
- Referral of pupils for additional assessment and support.
- Co-ordination of the learning support service and other support services for pupils with special needs.

The learning support teacher and resource teacher provide supervision support to allow opportunities for consultation between the class and learning support/resource teacher where necessary.

9. Liasing with Parents

Parents have rights and responsibilities in the education of their child. They are consulted when formulating and implementing their child's Individual Profile and Learning Programme (I.P.L.P.) for those children who have been formally assessed. They can contribute to the initial diagnostic assessment by sharing insights into their child's development and learning difficulties, by discussing outcomes of the assessment and by the selection of learning targets and associated activities based on the child's needs.

Parents are encouraged to contact the learning support or resource teacher if any difficulties arise during an instructional term and to attend a meeting at the end of an instructional term to discuss their child's progress (for children with an I.P.L.P.).

Parents of children in the junior class are encouraged to avail of suitable books to share with their child and given guidelines and strategies to help children with reading development.



10. Links with Outside Agencies

The class teacher will oversee initial contact with parents. The Learning Support Teacher and/or the Resource Teacher will liaise with assessment services and, where appropriate, make arrangements for additional educational provision for children with diagnosed special needs.

11. Child Welfare and Protection

Our school complies with the National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. Children typically travel in pairs between classrooms. All staff have a duty of care to the pupils in the school. In extreme circumstances it may be necessary to restrain or physically intervene to prevent a pupil from injuring him/herself, other students or staff members. If this situation occurs it will be documented and a record kept on file.

12. Compliance with Legislation / D.E.S. Circulars

This policy endeavours to comply with all legislative and departmental requirements and will be amended if necessary to take account of new legislation and in response to circulars from the Department of Education and Science.

13. Arrangements for Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually in September.

This policy was drafted by:

Board of Management

Pat McGrath
John Threadgold

Teachers

Mairéad Roche
Lillian Power

Parents

Patrick Roche
Madeline McGrath

This policy was formally ratified by the Board of Management on 31st January 2007.



Appendix 1

SUPPLEMENTARY LEARNING SUPPORT

I give permission for my child _____

to attend supplementary learning classes during the current school year. I also give consent for diagnostic testing to be administered to my child when necessary.

Signed _____

Signed _____

Date _____



Appendix 2

SUPPLEMENTARY LEARNING SUPPORT

I acknowledge that my child _____ has been offered
Supplementary learning support classes but I do not wish for him/her to avail of these classes
at this time. If I change my mind about this, I will inform the school in writing.

Signed _____

Signed _____

Date _____