

**Newport N.S. Whole School Policy for Special Education 2020**

Policy is informed by Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (2018) Revised model

Situation

Newport NS is a mixed primary school with:

- Eight mainstream teachers
- Three Explorers' class teachers for children with ASD
- Five Support teachers
- Eight SNAs (Special Needs Assistants)
- Principal

Beliefs and Principles

Our learning support programme is based on the following principles:

- Effective whole-school policies and parental involvement
- Prevention of failure
- Facilitation of the development of a truly inclusive school
- Provision of intensive early intervention
- **Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need**

**Aims**

The principal aim of the continuum of support is to identify and respond to needs in a flexible way, as early as possible. This approach is also supported by information from and engagement with external professionals, as required.

Role of the Board of Management

The Board of Management should:

- Oversee the development, implementation and review of the Resource / Learning Support Policy.
- Ensure that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided.
- Provide adequate funds for the purchase of Resource / learning support materials.
- Provide a secure facility for storage of records relating the pupils in receipt of learning support services.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities**Principal**

The principal teacher has overall responsibility for the school's learning support programme and for the operation of services for children with special educational needs. The principal will promote and facilitate continuous professional development of all teachers in relation to education of pupils with special educational needs.

**Co-Ordinator: Ms Connolly**

The role of co-ordinating learning support and special needs services will be fulfilled by the Deputy Principal part of her post of responsibility. These duties include:

- Maintaining a list of pupils who are identified as having additional educational needs.
- Helping co-ordinate the caseloads/work schedules of the learning support and Resource Teacher/Learning Support Teachers
- Supporting the implementation of a tracking system at whole-school level to monitor the progress of children with learning difficulties
- Advising parents on procedures for availing of special needs services
- Liaising with external agencies such as psychological services to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs.

Classroom Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his or her classes, including those with special educational needs. A particular responsibility of the class teacher is to create a classroom environment in which learning difficulties can be prevented or at least alleviated. This is best achieved by

- Co-operative teaching
- Heterogeneous group work
- Providing lower-achieving pupils with strategies for reading and problem solving
- Differentiation
- Collaborative problem-solving activities



- Providing pupils with extra tutoring in the key basic skills of numeracy and literacy.
- Setting up “buddy systems” in class i.e. more able pupils working collaboratively with other pupils in peer tutoring programmes and paired reading programmes, where appropriate (promoting social and emotional competence)

The class teacher will consult with and collaborate with the Support Teacher and parents in the development of a Pupil Profile and Learning Programme for children with special educational needs.

Role of Special Education Teacher (SET)

Allocation of individual children to the Support Teacher’s caseload is the responsibility of the school principal. Collaboration between the classroom teacher and the Support Teacher is crucial.

The SET should work closely with class teachers interpreting the outcomes of diagnostic assessments and providing other forms of additional support.

The SET will consult with and collaborate with parents in drawing up an Individual Profile and Learning Programme.

The main focus of the SET’s work is the provision of supplementary teaching to pupils either in the pupils’ own classrooms. The activities of the Support Teacher should include:

- Assisting in the implementation of a broad range of whole-school strategies designed to enhance early learning to prevent learning difficulties.
- Developing a Pupil Profile and Learning programme for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with class teachers and parents
- Maintaining a Monthly Planning and Progress Record or equivalent for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of learning support



- Delivering early intervention programmes and providing supplementary teaching in English and or mathematics to pupils in the junior section of the school [Reading recovery, Literacy lift-off, Station teaching]
- Being familiar with a wide range of teaching methodologies to meet a variety of needs
- Providing supplementary teaching in English and / or mathematics to pupils in the senior section of the school (station teaching, peer tutoring)
- Co-ordinating the implementation of whole school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, in line with the selection criteria specified in the school plan.

Special Needs Assistants

The school principal is ultimately responsible for the work of the Special Needs Assistants in the school. The SNAs will consult with the Class and SET with responsibility for the pupils in their care for everyday needs.

Parents

Parents, through their unique knowledge of their own child, have much to contribute to their child's learning programme. Collaboration and sharing of relevant information between teachers and parents have been shown to be of critical importance, particularly in situations where the child requires learning support.

Liaising with Parents

Effective communication with parents is critically important to the success of a learning support programme. Regular communication between the Support Teacher and the



pupil's parents should be maintained during supplementary teaching so that the pupil's progress can be reviewed and necessary adjustments made.

The class teacher will

- Make parents aware of the concerns of the school about their child's progress
- Seek parental approval to proceed with diagnostic assessment
- Maintain regular contact with the parents of each pupil who is in receipt of such teaching and keep them informed of their child's progress

The Support Teacher will

- Meet with the parents of each child to discuss the outcomes of the diagnostic assessment
- Communicate on an ongoing basis with parent of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching
- Consult with parents when supplementary teaching is to be discontinued

Parents should keep the class teacher informed of the progress that they observe in their child's learning.

Role of Pupil

Pupils who are in receipt of supplementary teaching should, as appropriate:

- Become familiar with the medium and short-term learning targets that have been set for them and they should be given the opportunity to contribute to the setting of such targets.



- Contribute to the selection of texts and other learning materials that are relevant to the attainment of their learning targets.
- Develop 'ownership' of the skills and strategies that are taught during supplementary teaching and learn to apply these learning strategies and skills to improve their own learning.
- Contribute to the evaluation of their progress by participation in appropriate assessment activities, including self- assessment.

"The involvement of pupils in the development implementation and review of their own learning programmes is an important principle underlining effective supplementary teaching" (Learning Support Guidelines p 54)

Internal Provision

Prevention Strategies.

Strategies for preventing learning difficulties could include:

- Development of agreed approaches to language development and to teaching other aspects of English and mathematics in order to ensure progression and continuity from class to class. (See Plean Scoile for English & Maths.)
- Provision of additional support in language development and in relevant early literacy and mathematical skills to pupils who need it
- Implementation of a whole-school parent involvement programme that focuses on developing children's oral language skills, sharing books with children, and developing their early mathematical skills



- Implementation of paired reading programmes involving parents and pupils in the school
- Ongoing observation and assessment of the language, literacy and numeracy skills of pupils in the infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties.
- Close collaboration and consultation between the Infant Teacher and the SET.

Early Intervention Strategies

The principle of early intervention should underpin school policy on learning support and the provision of supplementary teaching programmes in English and mathematics. Programmes with the following characteristics have proved most successful in improving pupils' achievements:

- They are set within a specific timeframe, such as an instructional term of 6 weeks of a full term.
- They are based on a shared expectation of success by everybody involved
- They involve small group teaching or one-to-one teaching
- They include a strong focus on the development of oral language, laying the foundation for meaningful reading activities and further development of language and comprehension skills
- They emphasise the development of phonemic awareness and a range of the word identification skills
- Teachers' classroom management is informed by the Incredible Years Programme.



- They engage pupils in frequent supervised oral and silent reading of texts at appropriate levels of difficulty, and their comprehension of these texts
- They stress the interconnected nature of listening, speaking, reading and writing
- In Mathematics, they focus on language development and the development of mathematical procedures and concepts.
- For children presenting with EBD, programmes focus on promoting self-awareness and well-being.

Screening, Assessment, Caseload, selection, Permission and Review

Preliminary Screening for Learning Difficulties

The following screening measures are administered by the class teacher with assistance from the Support Teacher where required:

- Junior Infants: Belfield Infant Assessment Profile with pupils about whom some concerns have been raised, Basic needs checklist, My thoughts about school checklist
- Senior Infants: Middle Infant Screening Test in February
- Learning environment checklist
- NRIT: First Class February
- First to Sixth: Standardised tests in Literacy and Numeracy in summer

The school will use percentile ranks to compare the achievement of pupils. Priority will be given to pupils who are performing at or below the 10th percentile. In order to allow for measurement error, consideration will be given to selecting pupils who achieve scores up to and including the 12th percentile.



- Literacy and Numeracy tests
- Screening tests of language skills

The judgement of the class teacher is an important factor in the selection of pupils for diagnostic assessment. The class teacher will contact the parents to make them aware of the school's concerns about a pupil's achievement and seek their permission to proceed with the diagnostic assessment, which may lead to supplementary teaching.

Diagnostic Assessment

The objectives of the diagnostic assessment conducted by the SET are to identify strengths and learning needs of an individual pupil. The following diagnostic tests are currently in use in this school:

- *Aston Index*
- *Neale Analysis of Reading Ability*
- *Bangor Dyslexia Test*
- *Quest*
- *Test of phonemic awareness (Sound Linkage programme)*

Outcomes of the assessment are interpreted in consultation with the class teacher. The most appropriate form of intervention for the pupil is considered. The results of the diagnostic assessment are recorded on an Individual Profile and Learning Programme. The programme is planned in consultation with the class teacher and the pupil's parents. Progress will be reviewed at the end of the instructional term. Decisions will be made at



this point on continuing or discontinuing supplementary teaching in consultation with the class teacher and pupil's parents.

We have a three-stage process to support pupils with special educational needs

Stage 1: Classroom Support

The classroom teacher looks at identifying pupils' needs in context, using the Continuum of Support framework. The classroom teacher then discusses the concerns with the child's parent(s). Concerns are recorded, ideas are discussed and a special learning plan is drawn up and implemented for the child by the classroom teacher.

The success of the plan is reviewed on an ongoing basis. Some children might have their need addressed at STAGE 1.

Stage 2: School Support

The classroom teacher, support teacher and parents re-assess the child's needs and a support plan is devised, detailing suitable teaching approaches, including team teaching, small group or individual tuition.

Stage 3 School Support Plus

The school formally requests a consultation with parents, teachers, and the Educational Psychologist. A new cycle of consultation, assessment, and planning takes place. This is the stage at which a formal Educational Psychological Assessment of the child might take place. Data generated from this process are used to plan appropriate intervention. The school may liaise with NEPS, SESE and/or other agencies at this stage.

A fundamental principle of supplementary teaching provision is that those pupils who are in greatest need should receive the highest level of support.

**Student Support File**

A Student Support File is developed to enable school to plan interventions and to track a student's pathway through the continuum of Support. Progress is reviewed following a period of intervention, and a decision is made as to the appropriate level of support required by the pupil.

Monitoring and Recording Outcomes

Pupils' progress in relation to achieving their targets should be regularly monitored. This stage of the process is informed by effective measurement of baseline performance through tests, checklists, observation, sample of work. This leads to the establishment of specific, timebound targets for the pupil.

Whole School Strategies for Communicating Information

Information will be communicated between the class teacher, Support Teacher and parents of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, so that each party is fully informed about the pupil's learning needs, their role in relation to meeting those needs, and the progress of the pupil.

It is essential that regular communication between the pupil's Support Teacher and class teachers should occur throughout each instructional term.



Policy for Explorer Classes

In September 2006 a class for children with Autism was established in Newport N.S. Since that time we have expanded our ASD classes to include a Pre-school, a Junior Explorers room and a Senior Explorers room.

These classes can cater for up to six children each (see Policy on Enrolment). Children who are diagnosed with Autism are described as being on the spectrum of Autism – ASD. The degree of Autism can vary widely from child to child; however, they all have what we call a ‘triad of impairment’. Autism can be described as developmental difficulty in three areas – social interaction, communication, and lack of flexibility in thinking and behaviour. One size cannot fit all when teaching any child and this is never truer than when teaching children with Autism.

Teaching Methods and Strategies

Our Pre-school and Explorer classes use a variety of teaching methods and communication tools. These methods very much depend on the level of Autism each pupil has whether the child is verbal or non-verbal.

- Teacch – Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children
- ABA – Applied Behaviour Analysis
- Attention Autism
- Floortime
- RPM



Communication

- PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)
- Lámh
- Communication Boards
- Communication apps

Links with Outside Agencies

The ASD class teacher will liaise with outside agencies such as Speech & Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Western Care - Autism Supports, Behaviour Support and Social Care where and when needed. The teacher will facilitate meetings with such agencies and coordinate meetings for individual children and their parents.

IEPs

An IEP (Individual Education Plan) is drawn up twice yearly for each pupil, in October and February. This IEP is drawn up in consultation with parents, teacher, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Psychologist and Principal. Where applicable Western Care services will also be asked for input. This IEP focuses on agreed specific areas for each pupil's education.

Assessment

In order to write an appropriate, SMART IEP, a full assessment of the child is of fundamental importance in assessing and identify their strengths and needs at a given time. A profile should be drawn up based on the teacher's observations, informal and formal assessment, discussions with parents and input from outside professionals. This will give a clear view of the child's priority needs for the coming months. The following assessments are to be used in the relevant classes.



- Basic Skills Checklist
- Pre-School Curriculum Guide (TEACCH)
- Pep 3
- ABLLS
- AFFLS

The above assessments are ASD specific. A teacher may also use assessments from the Diagnostic Assessment list on p9 where a child is more able.

Record Keeping

Each child will have a folder that is passed on from class to class. It will include the below headings and be regularly updated.

- Reports, Profile, IEPs, School Reports, Assessments, Speech & Language, OT and Behaviour (where applicable).

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The BOM will support the accessing of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) by staff. Relevant specialist training is accessed via the Special Education Support Service (SESS).

All teachers will be expected to complete the following CPD within the first year of teaching in the ASD class. These courses are essential to the class teacher upskilling and working effectively in an ASD setting. The following courses should be booked on the SESS website in August to secure a place.

- Introduction to ASD – 2 Day Course



- TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication – Handicapped Children) - 2 Day Course – Classroom Management
- TEACCH 5 Day course - Classroom Management, Teaching Strategies to access the curriculum
- ABLLS/ VP-Mapping – ASD specific assessment
- Pathways to Prevention – Manage and prevent challenging behaviour

A list of other recommended courses available from the SESS are displayed on the SESS website, <http://www.sess.ie/professional-development/calendar/asd>

Curriculum

All pupils are taught the full curriculum (with the exception of Gaeilge). Some pupils follow the curriculum for their chronological age, where others with learning difficulties are taught according to their level and ability. Our teaching of all children with ASD is child-centred, intensive, structured and purposeful. We aim to provide pupils with opportunities for learning with personal meaning that is interesting and motivating.

Integration

We strongly believe in integration for pupils in the ASD class. Some pupils are integrated for certain subject areas with their own class, and we are always striving for full re-integration into their class. Other pupils are not yet at the stage for integration; however, these pupils will be included in outings, games, assemblies etc. where possible.

Community Outings

The implementation of the primary school curriculum will be enhanced through a programme of trips to local places, designed to help further prepare the children for



successful living in our community (playground visits, coffee shop, shopping tasks, post office, swimming, etc.).

July Provision

The school runs a July Education Programme for the first two weeks of July. This programme is funded by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). It is open to all children in the Pre-school, Junior Explorers and Senior Explorers.

Monitoring and Review of Policy

A comprehensive review and revision of the elements of the above Policy for Explorer Classes should take place every two to three years, and should take into account the views of the Board of Management, the principal teacher, the ASD teachers on the school staff and the parents of pupils in the explorer classes. This policy may be revised based on the specific needs of pupils, i.e. new pupils.

The review should be instigated by the principal teacher and the outcomes should lead to a revision of the Policy for Explorer Classes and changes in specific practices as appropriate.



**SAMPLE LETTER SEEKING PARENTAL PERMISSION FOR THE RESOURCE/LEARNING
SUPPORT TEACHER FOR CHILD TO ATTEND RESOURCE/LEARNING SUPPORT:**

For the attention of the parents of _____

Dear Parents,

Following the screening test conducted here in school, we believe that your child would benefit from a period of supplementary teaching in the area of literacy, provided by our Support teacher, as explained to you by your child's class teacher.

We are pleased to inform you that we can offer your child a place on the Support teacher's caseload, and would like your permission for _____ to attend learning support. We also require permission to carry out some diagnostic tests. If you require any further clarification on this matter, you are more than welcome to call to the school at any time. It would be best to make an appointment with the support teacher in advance, in person or by telephone, so that we can offer you uninterrupted time.

Please complete the form below and return it to the school as soon as possible.

Thanking you for your co-operation.

_____ (Principal Teacher)

_____ (Date)

We give our permission for the Support teacher to carry out diagnostic assessments with our child _____ and attend the Support teacher.

We do not give our permission for the Support teacher to carry out diagnostic assessments with our child _____ and attend the Support teacher.

Signed _____ (Parent) Date _____