

Special Education Policy

Kilbonane National School
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Introduction

Kilbonane National School is co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Bishop of Cork and Ross. It is an 'ordinary' mainstream primary school, catering for a full cross section of children. The purpose of this SEN policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other interested parties on the provision of effective learning support to pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties, as well as to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act 1998.

The school currently has the following provisions to cater for children with Special Education Needs:

- **Allocation from NCSE of 45.00 hours SET per week (2024)**
- 2 full-time Special Education Teachers for children with Special Educational Needs (50 hours)
- 1 shared teacher (whose base is in Cloughduv NS) to make up the remaining 2 hours per week. This teacher will attend Kilbonane NS for full days on specific dates throughout the year.
- 1 Special Needs Assistant

Communication

This policy will be available on our school web site (www.kilbonaneschool.com).

New Special Education Model (2017)

The new Special Education model (outlined in circular 0013/2017) replaces the previous model. The key changes are as follows:

- Children can now be supported immediately, rather than having to wait for a diagnosis from a psychologist.
- Children will not be unnecessarily labelled.
- There will no longer be a distinction between Learning Support and Resource Teachers. Instead schools will now have Special Education Teachers who provide the appropriate support to the pupils in their charge.
- The Principal, in consultation with class teachers and SET teachers, will decide on the amount of special education support will be given to pupils.

Special Education Teaching:

Although Learning Support and Resource Teaching are no longer seen as separate under the new Special Education model, there are still distinct differences in how SET is provided. For this reason, this policy still uses the terms 'learning support' and 'resource'.

The principal aim of Learning Support is to optimise the teaching and learning process so as to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.

Specific Objectives of Learning Support

Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

- Facilitate pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level.
- Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning.
- Enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners within their own ability.

- Involve parents in supporting their children's learning.
- Promote collaboration among teachers.

Guiding principles

The school recognises that effective learning programmes are based on the following principles:

- Effective whole-school policies.
- Whole school involvement.
- Prevention of failure at infant level.
- Provision of intensive early intervention up to and including second class.
- Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need.

Prevention Strategies

As a means of preventing the occurrence of learning difficulties as far as possible, the following strategies are being implemented:

- The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to languages development, e.g. phonological awareness, and to the teaching of other aspects of English.
- Delay in introducing the formal process of reading as per the Revised Curriculum .
- Promotion of parental understanding and involvement through their attendance at an induction evening for the parents of incoming Junior Infants, the arrangement of formal and informal Parent-Teacher Meetings, regular school emails, as well as ongoing collaboration with Parents' Association.
- Implementation of the Literacy Lift-Off programme from Junior Infants to 2nd Class
- Maths Stations (i) Infant Classes x 3 times per week (ii) 1st to 4th Class x 2 times per week
- Ongoing observation and assessment of pupils by the Class Teacher.

Selection of Pupils for Learning Support

- The principle of Early Intervention applies; therefore pupils from Senior Infants to 4th Class are given priority in the allocation of Learning Support.
- In Junior Infants pupils are screened using teacher and SET teacher observation.
- From Senior Infants upwards, all pupils are screened annually, using appropriate standardised tests.
- Priority for Learning Support is given to those pupils who perform at or below the 10th Percentile, excluding in the main pupils who receive Resource Teaching.
- In the case of pupils performing at or below the 10th percentile, the screening process is followed by a consultative meeting between the Class Teacher, the Learning Support Teacher and the parents concerning the pupil's performance, and supplementary teaching is offered.
- In the allocation of places for Learning Support, the following are prioritised:
 1. Senior Infants identified by the Class Teacher, through Teacher Observation and/or MIST or other screening instruments, as having difficulty in literacy.
 2. Children from 1st and 2nd Class, at or below the 10th percentile in literacy.
 3. Children from 3rd and 4th Class, at or below the 10th percentile in literacy.
 4. Senior Infants, identified by the Class Teacher, through Teacher Observation and/or MIST or other screening instruments, as having difficulty in numeracy.
 5. Children from 1st and 2nd Class, at or below the 10th percentile in numeracy.
 6. Children from 3rd and 4th Class, at or below the 10th percentile in numeracy.

Provision of Supplementary Teaching

- The primary work of the Learning Support Teachers is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils identified above.

- One to one teaching may be provided where small group teaching has not been effective.
- Classes will be intensive in terms of frequency.
- A system of withdrawal and/or in-class support will operate in response to the needs of the individual pupil.
- The Class Teacher and the SET Teacher will develop a Student Support File, in consultation with the parents and Principal.
- If the pupil is in receipt of Resource teaching to address other needs, e.g. behavioural problems, sensory difficulty, it may be appropriate for the SET teacher to provide supplementary learning support as well.
- The SET teachers will maintain the following documentation in individualised files:
 1. Student Support File
 2. Short term planning and programme record
 3. Samples of work

Student Support File

The Student Support File (SSF) will address the pupils' full range of needs and will include:

- Details from the Class Teacher
- Assessment Results
- Other relevant information, e.g. reports from other agencies
- Learning strengths and attainments
- Priority Learning Needs
- Learning Targets
- Class based Learning Activities
- Supplementary support activities to include ICT
- Home Support Activities

Each plan will be monitored through teacher observation, the keeping of planning and progress records and through the pupil's own feedback.

A detailed review will take place in (i) September and (ii) the following February of each academic year. The SET Teacher and/or the Class Teacher will meet the parents to discuss the child's progress in the light of the review.

Timetabling

- The provision of Learning Support is in addition to the regular class teaching in English and Maths.
- Effort is made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curricular subject each time they attend Learning Support. A flexible approach to timetabling is adopted by the Class Teacher, though class disruption must be minimised.
- The provision of Learning Support may include withdrawal of pupils from their classroom and/or in-class tuition.
- In-class support, if appropriate, will be jointly designed and monitored by the Class Teacher and the SET Teacher.

Provision of Resources

- Resources for the provision of Learning Support include a variety of textbooks, library books and ancillary materials and oral language development materials. A variety of testing materials are also in use which include standardised, diagnostic, screening, reading experience, reading attainment, phonological awareness and Maths attainment.
- These resources may be made available to Class Teachers following consultation with the Learning Support Teacher.

Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching

- In general, children should not stay for more than 2 years in Supplementary Teaching, unless they are still at or below the 10th Percentile.
- Following the end of Instructional Term review as detailed above, a decision is made to continue/discontinue the provision of Supplementary Teaching.
- The decision making process involves consultation between the Class Teacher, the Learning Support Teacher, and the pupil's parents, and account is also taken of the overall Learning Support demands in the school.
- The criteria on which the decision will be made include:
 - A consideration as to whether the pupil has achieved some/all of the learning targets set.
 - A consideration as to whether the pupil will be able to cope independently/semi-independently in the classroom learning context.
- A decision to continue the provision of supplementary teaching will result in a revision of the pupil's Student Support File.

Referral to Out-of-School Agencies

With the new Special Education Model 2017, children can now be supported immediately, rather than having to wait for a diagnosis from a psychologist – i.e there is no requirement to refer pupils to out-of-school agencies in order to access SET. However, the school may still need the guidance of an expert from time to time and the NEPS psychologist assigned to the school provides this.

The NEPS psychologist meets with the Principal, SET Teachers and, if necessary, Class Teachers at the start of the academic year to discuss any potential concerns surrounding any students. Recommendations are made. If necessary, pupils can then be assessed if these recommendations/interventions are proving fruitless.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Learning Support is a collaborative responsibility shared by all partners in the learning experiences. It is important that all partners contribute in the planning and implementation of our school plan on learning support.

Board of Management

The role of the Board of Management is to:

- Oversee the development, implementation and review of the provision of Learning Support in the school.
- Ensure adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the SET Teachers.
- Provide a secure facility for storage or records in relation to pupils in receipt of Learning Support
- Budget for ongoing support for Professional Development in Learning Support for staff.

Principal

The role of the principal is to:

- Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policy on Learning Support in co-operation with the Board of Management, Teachers, parents and children.
- Work with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan on learning support in the context of Special Needs Education.
- Monitor the implementation of the school plan on an ongoing basis.
- Monitor the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with lowest levels of achievement.
- Help teachers increase their knowledge and skills in the area of learning support.

Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching. In supporting the development and implementation of the school plan on Learning Support, the class teacher should:

- Implement teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all pupils and to the greatest extent possible prevent the emergence of learning difficulties.
- Implement the school policies on screening and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in English and Maths by co-operating and assisting with the administration and scoring of appropriate screening measures.
- For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, to collaborate with the SET Teacher in the development of a Student Support File by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve these targets.
- For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, to adjust the classroom programmes in line with the agreed learning targets and activities.

With regard to teaching pupils with low achievement, the following general approaches and methods are recommended:

- Such children should be prioritised when accessing information from previous class teacher
- Priority when establishing parental contact
- Group teaching
- Modify presentation and questioning techniques to maximise the involvement of pupils with low achievement in class activities
- Placing emphasis on oral language development across the curriculum
- Providing pupils with extra tutoring in the key basic skills in literacy and numeracy
- Setting learning targets at an appropriate level
- Providing learning activities and material which are suitably challenging but which also ensure success and progress
- Setting up 'buddy systems' in class (high achievers collaboratively working with low achievers, e.g. peer tutoring / paired reading)
- Applying assessments and tests which offer challenge and opportunities for success to children of all levels of achievement.

A key role of successful Learning Support is a very high level of consultation and co-operation between the Class Teacher and the SET Teacher. Central to this consultation is the development, implementation and review of Individual Profile and Learning Programmes.

SET Teacher (Learning Support)

The role of the SET Teacher is to:

- Develop a Student Support File for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with the Class Teacher and parents.
- Maintain planning and progress record or equivalent for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of Learning Support.
- Provide teaching in English and Maths to pupils in the school who experience low achievement, in accordance with the school's selection criteria.
- Contribute to the development of the Special Education Policy at whole school level.
- Provide advice to the Class Teachers in such areas as individual pupil's assessment and programme planning, as well as approaches to language development, reading, writing and mathematics for pupils experiencing difficulties.

- Contribute at school level to decision making regarding the purchase of learning resource books and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms and in the SET rooms.
- Liaise with external agencies such as psychologist to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs.
- Maintain a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and special education support.

Parents

The role of parents supporting the Learning Support for their children is vital to its success. Specifically, parents contribute through:

- Regular communication with the Class Teacher and SET Teacher.
- Creating a home environment where literacy can thrive.
- Fostering positive attitudes about school and learning in the child.
- Participation in shared reading programme.
- Encouraging the child to visit library.
- Developing the child's oral language.
- Developing the child's social mathematics.

Communication Strategies

The operation of an effective communication system between all the parties involved in meeting the learning needs of the child is essential. The various strands of the system include:

- Class Teacher and the SET Teacher following a low score on a screening test.
- Principal and/or SET Teacher and/or Class Teacher and parents following a low score on a screening test, including the seeking of approval of further diagnostic assessment and/or provision of supplementary teaching.
- Regular communication between the SET Teacher and the Class Teacher and the participation in formal and informal meetings.
- Regular communication between the SET Teacher and parents.

Success Criteria

The school wide implementation of this policy will result in enhancement of pupils learning in the following ways:

- Improved standards of academic achievement with the pupil's individual learning programme.
- Enabling the discontinuation of the provision of Learning Support based on positive assessment results.
- Enhanced parental involvement in supporting their child's learning needs.
- Increased opportunities for effective communication between school personnel in relation to pupil's progress.
- Learning Support provision continuously focused on children from Junior Infants to Rang 2.

Entitlement to Resource Teaching

When a child continues to experience difficulty and is not making progress above the 10th percentile in literacy and numeracy, the child will normally be referred for psychological assessment, in consultation with parents, and may then be supported by a Resource Teacher (SET).

Pupils who display major behavioural or emotional difficulties may be referred for assessment.

Children with learning difficulties who are integrated into mainstream education may also be allocated resource time.

Children who have physical difficulties, e.g. deafness, sight impairment, cerebral palsy are usually allocated resource time.

The Role of the Resource Teacher (SET)

The SET Teacher helps to provide an education which meets the needs and abilities of children assessed as having difficulties. In addition, the SET Teacher should advise and liaise with other teachers, parents and other professionals in the children's interests. More specifically, the SET Teacher has responsibility for:

- Developing a Student Support File (SSF) for each pupil in consultation with other partners in education.
- Assessing and recording the child's needs and progress.
- Setting targets for each child and agreeing these with the class teacher and principal.
- Direct teaching of the child, either in a separate room or within the mainstream class.
- Team teaching when the child concerned will derive benefit from it.
- Advising class teachers in regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, textbooks, ICT and other related matters.
- Meeting and advising parents, when necessary, accompanied by the class teacher as necessary.
- Meeting with other relevant professionals, in the child's interests, eg psychologist, speech and language therapist, visiting teachers.

Role of Class Teacher, Parents, Principal, Board of Management

The role of all the above in the education of children who have been allocated resource teaching is as in the preceding section, i.e. the section on Learning Support.

Planning, Progress Records & Communication:

Long Term Planning:

Student Support File

As mentioned above, the Student Support File (SSF) will address the pupils' full range of needs and will include:

- Details from the Class Teacher
- Assessment Results
- Other relevant information, e.g. reports from other agencies
- Learning strengths and attainments
- Priority Learning Needs
- Learning Targets
- Class based Learning Activities
- Supplementary support activities to include ICT
- Home Support Activities

Short Term Planning/Cuntas Míosúil:

Weekly Planning and Progress Record

This document records the following:

- Weekly Learning Targets
- Daily record of material covered and progress made
- Cuntas Míosúil (will be emailed to the Principal each month)

Groups/Classes:

This applies where the Special Education Teacher (SET) is tasked with teaching a specific group or class one particular subject – for example, Maths.

At the start of the school year, the Class Teacher and SET will meet. As the Class Teacher has overall responsibility for the progress of his/her class, he/she will furnish the Special Education Teacher with:

- (i) their Long Term Plan (Scéim Bliana) and
- (ii) the appropriate section of their Short Term Plan (Scéim Coicíse)

It will be the responsibility of the SET to complete the latter each fortnight. This will be given to the Class Teacher at the end of each fortnight and the Class Teacher will be responsible for storing/filing in his/her own records.

The Special Education teacher, in consultation with the Class Teacher, will set out the following:

- Aims and Objectives
- Methodologies
- A clear record of material covered and progress made
- Assessment
- Differentiation

In addition, the SET and Class Teacher will arrange to meet at a suitable time once a month to compare notes, consult with each other and plan for the coming month.

Integration of Children with a Disability and/or Special Education Needs in Kilbonane NS

Enrolment of children with a disability and/or special education need

Application for all children, including children with a disability and/or other special education needs, is governed at all times by the school's current Enrolment Policy. However, the attention of parents of children with a disability and/or other special education needs is also drawn to the following points:

- Kilbonane Mixed National School is an 'ordinary' mainstream school, and has higher pupil/teacher ratios such as those that apply in 'special' schools.
- In general, the teachers in our school are trained and qualified to teach in mainstream education. They do not, in general, have any Special Education Needs Teacher Training, experience, or Qualifications, such as teachers in special schools have.
- While pupils with special needs can be integrated into a mainstream class, and may be supported by a Special Needs Assistant and Resource teaching, as allowed by the DES, this is not the same as the intensive one to one teaching s/he would enjoy in a special school.
- An ordinary mainstream school does not have ancillary services enjoyed by special schools, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy.
- A child with special needs integrated into an ordinary mainstream class will by the nature of such integration experience the normal day to day happenings, determined by the reality of school life, and the existing customs and practices. Every child in the school, including those with a disability and /or special educational needs is bound by school policies both in existence and those developed from time to time by the Staff and Board of Management. The school cannot offer any additional tuition, support and supervision beyond that which is offered to any other pupil in the school, at times other than when the school is in operation during the normal school year. The Class Teacher, Resource Teacher (if any) and Special Needs Assistant (if any) will periodically be required to participate at Staff Development and Curriculum Training Courses. Such professional development events take place within the existing school year, and all the children, including pupils with a disability and/or special educational needs are in the care of their parents at the times. Such extraordinary closures will be notified to parents of all pupils through the medium of the school email system. A child with a disability and/or special educational needs integrated into an ordinary mainstream class will not have any separate or additional provisions put into place from his peers in the event of staff illness, absences or whole school events such as school visits, parish liturgy etc.
- From year to year the allocation of teachers to classes is focused on the needs of the whole school, and consequently the school cannot guarantee long term continuity or predictability in personnel.

Notwithstanding the above points, the school is committed to providing the best possible educational service to pupils with a disability/ special educational needs. To ensure this, we require:

- A close level of co-operation between parents, the Class Teacher, and any other school personnel assigned to support the child.
- To enable us to provide the best services for the pupil, and to access any additional support/s that may be available, we require parents to supply the school with copies of the most recent psychological and medical reports prior to enrolment. These will be treated in the utmost confidence at all times.
- Copies of all relevant assessments and reports should be supplied to the school as these become available, on an ongoing basis.

Educational Provision for Overseas Children

Introduction

Kilbonane National School welcomes pupils of all nationalities and cultures. This document sets out our policy in relation to the enrolment and education of these children.

Principles

- Our school supports the principle of inclusiveness
- Our school respects the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life of all its pupils.
- All children have an equal right to education. In order to fulfil this right, differences will be respected and valued in our school.
- Our school will be pro-active in challenging racism.
- Our school is committed to the principle of inter-culturalism, and seeks to actively promote an environment in which cultural differences can be explored and respected, where pupils can learn from each other, and where cooperative learning activities are employed across the curriculum.

Enrolment of Overseas Pupils

- The school's Enrolment Policy governs enrolment of all pupils.
- The enrolment procedure for non-national pupils is exactly the same as that for Irish pupils.
- Overseas children are welcome to enrol in our school, provided there is a place in the appropriate class, in line with our enrolment policy.
- Parents of overseas children will be afforded help in completion of enrolment documentation, should they require it.
- Every effort will be made to create a warm and welcoming environment for overseas parents who approach the school to enrol their children.

Education of Overseas Pupils

- Overseas pupils will be placed in an age appropriate class as far as possible.
- Every effort will be made to help the pupils to settle socially in the class, and a 'buddy' will be appointed to help all new pupils to settle in. Every effort will be made by all school personnel to help the child settle in his/her new environment.
- The child will not be required to study Religion, should the child be non – Catholic. However, for organisational reasons, the child may be required to remain in his/her class during Religion time.
- In general, as per Circular 12/96, if English is not the first language of the child, s/he may qualify for exemption from the study of Irish, and the school will complete the necessary documentation to obtain this exemption. However, for organisational reasons, the child may be required to remain in his/her class during Irish time.
- While we recognise that all new pupils need time to settle in and adjust, we require all pupils to adhere to the school's Code of Behaviour, in the interest of all. Overseas children enjoy the same rights and privileges, and the same responsibilities, as all other pupils.
- Home school liaison is central to the successful integration of overseas children into the school, and the school will be pro-active in promoting positive home school relations.

Provision of Supplementary English Support for Overseas Children

- The school currently has two full time SEN teachers to support the language needs of overseas pupils.
- The amount of resource time allocated to any child will depend on his/her current command of the language, and his age.
- In general, older pupils will be offered more Resource time, as there will be more pressure on them to attain mastery.
- Resource time will be offered on a one to one basis, or in a small group setting, depending on the needs of the child. This will be determined by the Resource Teacher.
- This resource time may be offered on a withdrawal basis or by the Resource Teacher working with the child in his/her classroom. This will be decided by the teachers, based on the needs of the child.
- The DES allows two years of language support for each child, and in general, the child's supplementary support will be phased out after this period.
- The Resource Teachers will avail of in-service training in the provision of support to non national pupils.

Whole School Measures to ensure successful integration of overseas pupils

Schools with an inclusive curriculum, which reflects and affirms diversity of culture, ethnicity and religion, will help to ensure that children from ethnic minorities feel valued and accepted. To promote appreciation of diversity, our school is committed to

- The delivery of an intercultural education to all pupils which is cross curricular, and which permeates the ethos of the school.
- The provision of books that give a world view from a variety of perspectives and that portray characters from different ethnic backgrounds.
- The provision of arts education experiences which reflects different experiences and cultures.
- The effective delivery of the SPHE programme.
- The affirmation of the languages and cultures which our overseas pupils bring with them.
- The school will make every effort to combat racism, and this will be underpinned by the schools Code of Behaviour.
- The school will encourage overseas parents to become actively involved in Parents' Association activities.

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Board of Management at a meeting on 27 September 2022 and will be reviewed as necessary.