

Below is the current text of this policy. Please note, however, that it is due for review during the 2019/20 school year.



## **Special Educational Needs Policy**

Some terms used in this document are abbreviated.

SEN: Special educational needs

SENO: Special educational needs organizer

LST: Learning Support Teacher

DES: Department of Education and Skills

NEPS: National Educational Psychological Service

ILP: Individual learning Plan

GLP: Group Learning Plan

NRIT: Non-reading intelligence test

MIST: Middle Infant screening test

IEP: Individual Education Profile

SNA: Special Needs Assistant

LSR: Learning Support/Resource

ASD: Autistic Spectrum Disorder

YARC: York Assessment of Reading Comprehension

SNA: Special Needs Assistant

## **Introduction**

Dublin 7 Educate Together is a co-educational mainstream primary school catering for children from mixed social and cultural backgrounds. The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers and parents and other interested parties on the provision of effective Resource and Learning support to pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties, as well as to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act 1998. The following categories of pupils will receive supplementary teaching from the Learning Support Teacher and the Resource Teacher.

- Pupils whose achievement is at or below the 10th percentile on standardised tests in Literacy or Numeracy.
- Pupils with learning difficulties, pupils with social or emotional difficulties and pupils with co-ordination or attention control difficulties associated with identified conditions.
- Pupils who have been identified as being in the low incidence category (Appendix 1 Sp. Ed. Circular 02/05) will receive an individual allocation of support through the Special Education Needs Organizer. (SENO)
- Pupils who have special educational needs arising from high incidence disabilities (borderline mild general learning disability, mild general learning disability and specific learning disability).

## **Implementation and Review**

This policy will be operative as of the 1st January 2016. It was reviewed during the school year 2015/16. *[Note added 2019-06-11: Due for review during school year 2019/20.]*

## **Ratification**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Dublin 7 Educate Together in January 2016.

## **LEARNING SUPPORT POLICY**

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. In 2014 it was decided that each class level would be assigned one dedicated LSR teacher to streamline the support.

### **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 to the best of their ability.
- Involve parents in supporting their children's learning.
- Promote collaboration among teachers.

### **Guiding Principles**

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

- Effective whole-school policies.
- Whole school involvement.
- Provision of intensive early intervention.
- 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 language development e.g. phonological awareness.
- The development and implementation of an agreed whole school approach to the Maths programme e.g. Maths language.
- Promotion of parental involvement.
- Formal and informal Parent/Teacher meetings.
- School circulars.
- Class-based early intervention by the class teacher resulting in provision of additional support.
- Ongoing observation and assessment of pupils by Class Teacher.

### **The staged approach to Assessment and Selection of Pupils for Learning Support and other Educational Needs**

Prior to any pupil being referred to the Learning Support Teacher, the classroom teacher draws up a programme suitable to the pupil's needs based on his/her observations.

The principle of Early Intervention applies. Therefore pupils in Junior classes are given priority in the allocation of Learning Support:

- Junior Infant pupils are screened using teacher observation and school designed baseline checklists.
- 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
- In the case of pupils performing at or below the 10th Percentile, the screening process is followed by a meeting between the Class Teacher and the Learning Support Teacher concerning the pupil's performance.
- YARC and other individual screening and diagnostic tests are administered by the Learning Support Teacher. A further consultative meeting then takes place between Learning Support teacher and Class teacher to consider the outcome of the assessment.
- Supplementary teaching is offered.
- Parents will be informed.

In the allocation of places for Learning Support, prioritization is as follows:

- Children in Junior and Senior Infants, identified by the Class Teacher, through Teacher observation.
- Children in 1st and 2nd classes at or below the 10th Percentile in literacy.
- Children in 3rd class and 4th class at or below the 10th Percentile in literacy.
- Children in 1st and 2nd classes at or below the 10th Percentile in numeracy.
- Children in 3rd and 4th classes at or below the 10th Percentile in numeracy.
- Children in 5th and 6th classes at or below the 10th Percentile in numeracy and/or literacy
- Children in 2nd to 6th class where there is a discrepancy between the standard scores they achieve in the Literacy and Numeracy standardised tests and their scores in the N.R.I.T., the Verbal Reasoning Test or the Non Verbal Reasoning Test.
- Support for children presenting with difficulties in literacy and numeracy in all classes e.g. children at or below the 20th Percentile provided the numbers attending learning support groups are sufficiently low.

### **Provision of Supplementary Teaching**

- The primary work of the Learning Support Teacher is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils identified above.
- Review of Learning Support provision will take place at least once each term.
- Classes will be intensive in terms of frequency.

- A combination of withdrawal and in-class support models are used as appropriate. Support involves collaboration between Class Teachers and L.S Teacher in the formulation and implementation of programmes of work for children with specific needs and those experiencing difficulty in specific areas of learning and development. Where children are withdrawn, efforts are made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curricular area each time they attend Learning Support.
- The Learning Support Teacher and Class Teacher, in consultation with the Principal/Deputy Principal and with reference to guidelines issued by the DES, determines the size of groups, taking into account the individual needs of pupils and the overall caseload.
- One to one teaching may be provided where the caseload permits.

The Class Teacher and the Learning Support Teacher meet to devise Individual learning Plan (ILP) and/or Group Education Learning Plan (GLP).

It will be necessary to provide time and supervision of classes in order to facilitate these meetings.

If there is sufficient time available, it is possible that some children who have high levels of ability may be given the opportunity to work on a more challenging programme with the involvement of a member of the SEN team. This would need to be explored and discussed at staff level, should the possibility arise.

### **Individual Learning Plan and Group Learning Plan**

The Individual Learning plan/Group Learning Plan will be in accordance with the criteria as advised in the Learning Support Guidelines, issued by the DES in 2000. The plan will address the pupils' full range of needs and will include:

- Details from 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 computer programmes.
- 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 at the end of the instructional term. The Learning Support Teacher and/or Class Teacher may meet parents to discuss the child's progress in the light of the review.

### **The Learning Support Teacher will maintain the following documentation in individual files**

- Individual Learning Plan/ Group learning Plan
- Standardised Test Results
- Diagnostic / Screening Tests

- Reports from outside agencies
- Short term planning and programme record.
- Other records, e.g. recordings of oral work.
- Samples of written work.

### **Continuing and Discontinuing Learning Support Teaching**

In general children should not stay for more than two years in Learning Support Teaching unless they are still at or below the 10th percentile or have a specific learning need e.g. scoring D in Dyslexia Profile.

Following the end of the instructional term and the review as detailed above, a decision is made to continue /discontinue the provision of Learning Support teaching.

The criteria on which this decision is made include:

- Has the pupil achieved some/all of the learning targets set?
- Will the pupil be able to cope in the classroom learning context?

A decision to continue the provision of supplementary teaching will result in a revision of the pupil's ILP (Individual learning plan). The decision-making process will involve consultation between the Class Teacher, Learning Support Teacher and parents. Account will also be taken of the overall learning support demands in the school.

### **Communication Strategies**

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

- Meeting parents of Junior Infant children to explain school policies and how parents and teachers can work together for the benefit of pupils.
- Informing parents of concerns regarding progress in school.
- Outlining the school's practice with regard to diagnostic testing and follow up procedures.
- Consultation between Class teacher and Learning Support teacher following a low score on a screening test.
- Consultation between Principal/ Deputy Principal and/or Learning Support teacher
- Ongoing communication between the LST (Learning Support Teacher) and the class teacher.
- Regular communication between the LST and parents.

### **Referral to Out-of-school Agencies**

- The LST co-ordinates the referral of pupils to outside agencies, e.g. Educational Psychologist.
- The Principal/ Deputy Principal and/or LST and/or Class Teacher meet with the parents to discuss the need for the referral and to seek consent.
- The class teacher completes the necessary referral form in consultation with the Learning Support Teacher.

- The external professional visits the school to meet with the pupil, parents, principal, class teacher and the LST as appropriate and assessment is conducted.
- This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed.
- Where concern arises regarding the manner or speed of the follow-through post assessment, such concern is pursued by the Principal with the out-of-school agency.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Responsibilities for the implementation of this policy is assigned as follows:

#### **Principal/ Deputy Principal**

Co-ordination of Learning Support and Special Needs services.

#### **Learning Support Teacher:**

- Assisting in the implementation of a broad range of whole school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to support the children with learning difficulties.
- Development of individual profiles and learning plans for pupils who are selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with the class teacher and parents / guardians.
- Maintaining weekly plans for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of learning support.
- Delivering intensive early intervention programmes to pupils in Junior Classes.
- Conducting regular meetings with parents to discuss pupil's progress.
- Providing teaching in Literacy and/or Numeracy to pupils who experience low achievement.
- Contributing to the development of policy at the whole school level and at the cluster level where applicable.
- Liaising with class teacher on individual pupil's needs and progress;
- Liaising with external agencies;
- Maintaining a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and special educational needs;
- Conducting any diagnostic assessment;
- Maintaining and reviewing pupil records; and
- Liaising with the school principal, teachers and parents.

#### **Role of the SNA**

The work of the SNA will be supervised by the Principal and by the Class Teacher. He/ She will form part of the Support Team and will attend meetings when necessary. The duties assigned to the SNA will include the following:

- Support children with special needs in coping with day to day life in the school.
- Assisting the Class Teacher in the implementation of the Individual support programme.
- Preparation and tidying of the classroom resources in which the pupil(s) with special needs is being taught.

- Assisting with escort duties in or out of school visits, tours etc.

### **Role of the Class Teacher**

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the pupils' learning needs within his / her class. Their responsibilities include:

- Read all relevant reports on a child before they begin teaching him/her in September.
- Making parents aware of the concerns of the school about their child's progress.
- Outlining the schools practice with regard to diagnostic testing and follow up procedures.
- Where possible attending meeting between Learning Support Teacher and pupil's parents.
- Consulting and co-operating with Learning Support Teacher on pupil's ILP or GLP.
- Being alert to the possibility that some children may have a specific learning difficulty and bring it to the attention of the learning support teacher.
- Modifying class programmes to suit the needs of pupils.
- Where there is an SNA, outlining their duties clearly for the instructional term.

### **Parents**

The school welcomes parental input, about any aspect of their child's special needs and value parents as partners in education. Parents are informed about their rights and responsibilities in relation to these needs being met at school. Parents are consulted informally and formally during the school year, which can be requested by either parents or teachers. Parents are advised as to how they can support school work at home. If they so wish, the school can give parents information on reading material on outside bodies which may be useful in relation to their child's SEN.

If parents do not want their child to avail of learning support teaching in school, they should so advise in writing. The school is mindful of possible parental sensitivities around their child's special educational needs, particularly if difficulties with literacy or other needs exist within the child's immediate or extended family.

It is in the best interests of the child that all relevant information be given to the school at enrolment and following any assessment or other outside professional advice/ consultation.

### **Board of Management**

The Board is responsible for the broader implementation of this policy and for seeking to ensure that the school is sufficiently resourced to enable the policy to be meaningfully implemented.

### **Success Criteria**

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

- Improved standards of academic achievement with the assistance of the pupil's individual learning programme.
- The discontinuation of the provision of learning support based on positive assessment results.
- Enhanced parental involvement in supporting the child's learning needs.



- Increased opportunities for effective communication between school personnel in relation to pupils' progress.

## **RESOURCE TEACHING POLICY**

### **Rationale**

The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other relevant persons on the provision of effective teaching support for children experiencing a learning disability or any special needs and to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act 1988.

### **Role of the Resource Teacher**

The role of the Resource Teacher is to provide support for children with special needs by

- Developing an Individual education Profile for each pupil in consultation with other partners in education.
- Assessing and recording the child's needs and progress.
- Setting specific time-related 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.
- Meeting and advising parents when necessary, accompanied by the class teacher if necessary.
- Meeting with relevant professionals in the child's interest e.g. psychologists, speech and language therapists and visiting teachers.

### **Timetabling**

- The provision of Resource teaching is in addition to regular teaching.
- Pupils who receive Resource teaching allocation will also have their learning support needs met within this allocated time.
- Time allocated per child is based on the hours authorised by SENO and with the parent's agreement.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curricular area each time they attend except where a pupil has been exempted from a subject by the DES.
- Likewise the school will endeavour to ensure that pupils do not miss classes they particularly enjoy such as Art, P.E. or Information and Communications Technology.

### **Role of the Class Teacher, SNA, Parents, Principal and Board of Management**

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

### **Appendix**

(See 'Assessment policy'.)