

Mount Sion Primary School

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Special Educational Needs Policy



Mount Sion Primary School

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Introduction

Mount Sion is a Catholic Primary school, which caters for boys only from Junior Infants to 6th Class. It operates under the patronage of Most Rev. Dr. Alphonsus Cullinan, Bishop of the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore, and the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools' Trust and it fully supports the religious and educational philosophy of the founder, Edmund Rice. The Board of Management recognizes the role of the Trustees as per Section (2d) of the Education Act 1998.

Mount Sion Primary School is a DEIS Band 2 mainstream primary school, catering for all boys regardless of background. The purpose of this SEN policy is to provide practical guidance for Teachers, SNAs, other Support Staff who may from time to time work with our pupils and our parents/guardians on the provision of effective learning support to pupils experiencing 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:

- One Literacy Support Teacher (Learning Support)
- One Numeracy Support Teacher (Learning Support)
- Two Resource Teachers to support pupils with Low Incidence Disabilities
- One English as an Additional Language Teacher
- One EAL/General Allocation Teacher (Shared with Ferrybank BNS) (Learning Support)
- One part-time Resource Teacher to support pupils with Low Incidence Disabilities
- 5 Special Needs Assistants.

Implementation and Review

The implementation of this Policy was reviewed in December 2016. It will be reviewed at the end of every third school year, or as circumstances may warrant.

Communication

This policy will be available on our school web site. All school policies will also be disseminated to parents through making copies available in the school office.

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, numeracy, social, emotional and behavioural skills 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 at their ability 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 at Infant Level
- Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need
- Other than where a pupil qualifies for both Literacy and Numeracy Support, in general a pupil will have his additional learning needs met by one Support Teacher.

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
- The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to the teaching of aspects of Maths, e.g. our whole school approach to Maths Language
- Promotion of parental understanding and involvement through their attendance at an induction meeting for the parents of incoming Junior Infants, the provision of the Tips for Parents booklet, the arrangement of formal and informal Parent-Teacher Meetings, and provision of regular school newsletter, as well as ongoing collaboration with Parents' Council
- Implementation of Station Teaching via the TY Project
- Class based early intervention by the Learning Support Teacher in Infants resulting in the provision of additional individualised support. In Junior Infants this will be primarily focused at identification of pupils who may be in need of LS
- 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 Second Class are given priority in the allocation of Learning Support
- In Junior infants pupils are screened using teacher and LS 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 12th Percentile, excluding in the main pupils who receive Resource Teaching.
- In the case of pupils performing at or below the 12th 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 Rang 1 and Rang 2, at or below the 12th percentile in literacy.
 3. Children from Rang 3-Rang 4 at or below the 12th 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 Rang 1 and Rang 2, at or below the 12th percentile in numeracy.
 6. Children from Rang 3 and Rang 4, at or below the 12th percentile in numeracy.
 7. When caseloads allow pupils from 5th and 6th class will continue to access Learning Support. This may be on a short or long term basis.
 8. Pupils who are diagnosed as having Specific Learning Difficulties will continue to receive Learning Support
 9. For the remainder of the school year 2016/17 an emphasis will be placed on implementing Maths Recovery. The methodology used will mainly be based on Maths the Maths Recovery Programme. Therefore Numeracy Support this year will be offered from 1st class onwards.

Provision of Supplementary Teaching

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

- The maximum case load at any one time shall be 30 pupils
- 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 Learning Support Teacher will meet to devise an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Group Education Plan (GEP), in consultation with the Principal and parents.
- If a pupil is receiving support from a Resource Teacher in English / Maths, he will not normally be provided with supplementary teaching from the Learning Support Teacher as well. This may vary depending on the needs of an individual pupil.

- If the pupil is in receipt of support from a Resource Teacher to address other needs, e.g. behavioural problems, sensory difficulty, it may be appropriate for the Learning Support Teacher to provide supplementary teaching as well.
- The Learning Support Teachers will maintain the following documentation in individualised files:
 1. Individual Profile and Learning programme
 2. Short term planning and programme record
 3. Samples of written work
 4. Reading analysis records.
 5. Other records as deemed appropriate

Individual Learning Plan / Group Education Plan

The Individual Learning Plan / Group Education Plan will be in accordance with the pro-forma 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 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 at the end of each Instructional Term. The Learning Support 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 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 Learning Support Teacher.

Provision of Resources

- Resources for the provision of Learning Support include a variety of textbooks, library books, ICT 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.
- Following consultation between the Learning Support Teacher, Principal and Class Teacher, funding for materials may be provided from funding available through the Board of Management
- Learning Support resources will be primarily be used in the learning Support Room. 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 12th 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:
 1. A consideration as to whether the pupil has achieved some/all of the learning targets set
 2. 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 IEP.

Referral to out of School Agencies

- The Principal co-ordinates the referral of pupils to outside agencies, e.g. Educational Psychologist
- To further inform referrals for assessment a class teacher may complete an internal referral form
- The NRIT screening test is administered in both 2nd and 4th classes. This enables a comparison of potential ability with performance outcomes.
- The Principal and/or Learning Support Teacher 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 appropriate school personnel.
- The external professional visits the school to meet with the pupil, parents, principal, Class Teacher and the Learning Support Teacher as appropriate, and the 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 of speed of the follow-through post assessment, such concern is pursued by the Principal with the out of school agency concerned.

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 Learning Support 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 Learning Support 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
- Assume direct responsibility for co-ordination learning support in the context of Special Needs Services
- Oversee the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need
- Keep teachers informed about the external assessment service that are available and the procedure to be followed in initiation referrals
- 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 Learning Support Teacher in the development of an individual profile and learning programme 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
- Weekly/fortnightly plan of work in English and Maths to be provided to the Learning Support Teacher in advance.

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
- Carrying out error analyses of a pupil's work to pinpoint specific areas of difficulty
- 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 Learning Support Teacher. Central to this consultation is the development, implementation and review of Individual Profile and Learning Programmes

Learning Support Teacher

The role of the Learning Support Teacher is to:

- Develop an individual profile and learning programme for each pupils 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 policy on Learning Support at whole school level
- Provide advice to the Class Teachers in such areas as individual pupils 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 Learning Support room
- Perform a defined role in co-ordinating the provision of Special Needs and Learning Support services in the school
- Maintain a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and special education support
- Track the progress pupils who have discontinued Learning 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 Learning Support 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 considered essential. The various strands of the system include:

- Class Teacher and the Learning Support Teacher following a low score on a screening test
- Principal and/or Learning Support 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 Learning Support Teacher and the Class Teacher, through participation in formal and informal meetings
- Regular communication between the Learning Support 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.



Resource Teaching Policy



Entitlement to Resource Teaching

1 When a child continues to experience difficulty and is not making progress above the 12th 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.

2 Pupils who display major social, emotional or behavioural difficulties may be referred for assessment and may thereafter be allocated resource hours.

3 Children with learning difficulties who are included in mainstream education may also be allocated resource time.

4 Children who have physical difficulties, e.g. deafness, sight impairment, muscular dystrophy are usually allocated resource hours.

The Role of the Resource Teacher

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

- Developing an individual learning programme for each pupil in consultation with other partners in education
- Assessing and recording the child's needs and progress
- Working on the specific, time-related targets for each child having agreed these with the class teacher, principal and parents
- 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, SNA, Principal as necessary
- Meeting with other relevant professionals, in the child's interests, eg psychologist, speech and language therapist, visiting teachers.
- When needed and if deemed an appropriate intervention the Resource Teacher will be available as a 'respite' in times of distress for certain pupils experiencing trauma or anxiety relating to their learning difficulties
- The Resource Teacher will teach pupils the necessary skills to access the curriculum and to adhere to the school Code of Behaviour.
- The Resource Teacher may target classes (in consultation with the Class Teacher and Principal) for supplementary teaching, SPHE, especially regarding classes that display social or behavioural challenges. To this end the Friends for Life Programme may be utilised to teach the required skills to the pupils/classes concerned.
- Resource Teacher may implement programmes designed by relevant professionals, e.g. Speech & Language Therapy

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.



Educational Provision for Pupils for whom English is an Additional Language



Introduction

Mount Sion Primary School welcomes pupils of all nationalities and cultures, and its current enrolment includes many pupils who are not of Irish ethnicity. 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, valued and celebrated 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 non-Irish Pupils

- The school's Enrolment Policy governs enrolment of all pupils.
- The enrolment procedure for non-Irish pupils is exactly the same as that for Irish pupils, other than a request is made to parents to provide passport/ID Card identification for themselves and their child
- All Parents 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 non-Irish parents who approach the school to enrol their children.

Education of non-Irish Pupils

- Non-Irish 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 new environment
- The child will not be required to study Religion, should the child be non - Catholic. However, for organisational reasons, the child will be required to remain in his class during Religion time
- In general, as per Circular 12/96, if English is not the first language of the child, 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 will be required to remain in his class during Gaeilge lessons
- 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 Pupils for whom English is an Additional Language

The school currently has one full teaching post plus 2/5ths of an EAL/GA post to support the language needs of Pupils for whom English is an Additional Language

The amount of resource time allocated to any child will depend on his/her current command of the language, and his age

- As pupils are only entitled to two years EAL Support on their arrival into Ireland in general, pupils in Infants and those enrolling from abroad will be offered more Resource time.
- 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 EAL Teacher in consultation with the Class Teacher.
- This resource time may be offered on a withdrawal basis or by the EAL Teacher working with the child in his classroom. This will be decided by the teachers, based on the needs of the child
- The Department of Education and Skills 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 EAL Teacher will avail of in-service training in the provision of support to non Irish pupils.

Whole School Measures to ensure successful inclusion of non-Irish pupils

Our school endeavours to create an inclusive curriculum, which reflects and affirms diversity of culture, ethnicity and religion and 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 annual celebration of Culture during the week of St. Patrick's Day
- The school will make every effort to combat racism, and this will be underpinned by the schools Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policy
- The school will encourage non-Irish parents to become actively involved in Parents' activities.

This policy was reviewed in December 2016

Signed: _____
Br. Phil Ryan, Chairperson

Date: _____