

Learning Support Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy was drawn up by the principal, class teachers and learning support team of St. Michael's NS Cloonacool on 7th December 2009. The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and interested persons on the provision of effective learning support to pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties. Also to fulfill obligations under the Education Act 1998, Equal Status Act 2000, Education Welfare Act 2000 and Education for Persons with Disabilities Act 2004, Special education Circular Sp Ed 02/05, to enable children with special educational needs to join in the activities of the school along with other children.

This policy was reviewed in Oct 2012 and again in March 2014 following recommendations during incidental inspection Sept 2013.

The school aims to meet the needs of any child whom the parent wishes to register at the school as long as a place is available. Parents are required to notify the school of their child's special needs advance of enrolment. The Board of Management may request a copy of the child's medical or psychological report.

The Belief Statement

All our children have a right to an education, which is appropriate to them as individuals. We want all our children to feel that they are a valued part of our school community. As far as possible, it is our aim to minimize the difficulties that children may experience. We are dedicated to helping each child to achieve his/her individual potential. The provision of a quality system of learning support and an inclusive curriculum is integral to this commitment.

Rationale

The school currently has the following provisions:

- One learning support/resource teacher/shared with Castlerock N.S. (four days a week)
- One part-time resource teacher/shared with two other primary schools (6.8 hours per week)

Learning Support Policy

This policy is based on:

1. Standardised tests
2. Diagnostic tests
3. End of year reports
4. Informal teacher observation of areas of weakness in literacy and numeracy
5. Class based assessments

Where a class teacher recognises that a child is experiencing difficulty in literacy or numeracy or where the child scores at or below the 10th percentile that child will be identified as needing learning support. Class teachers will have ensured parents will be notified and a meeting occurs with L/S teacher. We are following the staged approach to assessment, identification and programme planning according to Special Ed 02/05.

Subject to the guidelines of the DES it is the policy of this school to try and include other children who have not scored below the 10th percentile in learning support if there is available space when all the pupils with greatest need have been included.

Guiding principles

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

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

Specific Objectives:

1. To foster an understanding of the process and implementation of a learning support plan
2. To nurture self-esteem through an integrated approach.
3. To promote the quality and equality of this educational establishment
4. To promote holistic development of each child
5. Involve parents in supporting their children's learning
6. Promote collaboration among teachers

Prevention Strategies

Learning Support Policy

Since 2009 learning support is being provided to Senior Infants for phonetic awareness as a preventative strategy. After the MIST test Senior infants follow the Forward Together Programme. As a further early intervention LS will provide support to first/second class in the area of literacy. Rang 1 to Rang 6 are involved in the Buddy Reading Programme during April every year This decision was made due to positive feedback from children, teachers and parents.

2012-2013

L/S teacher-Team teaching

Mon, Wed & Fri 10.00-10.40

Senior Infants focus on phonics/literacy

Mon, Wed & Fri 11.00-12.00

1st & 2nd Class- Focus on literacy

3rd-6th Class Pupils receive L/S individually or in small groups.

This timetable is subject to change according to the needs within the school.

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

- Class based early intervention by the learning support teacher from Infants to Rang 2 resulting in the provision of additional individualised support.
- Following recommendation during incidental inspection it has been agreed that any child experiencing significant difficulty (highlighted by classroom based assessment) will undergo further diagnostic testing/screening. In Jr. Infants this will be primarily focused at identification of pupils who may be in need of early intervention for a specific period of time.
- The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to oral language (SSE), phonological awareness, and to the teaching of other aspects of English e.g. writing genres.
- Implementation of Buddy Reading Programme in all classes.
- Ongoing observation and assessment of pupils by the class teacher
- The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to the teaching of aspects of numeracy, e.g. our whole school approach to the language of tables and subtraction
- Promotion of parental understanding and involvement through their attendance at an induction meeting for the parents of incoming Junior Infants, and the arrangement of formal Parent-Teacher Meetings

Differentiation

Access to the schools broad and balanced curriculum is achieved for most children by differentiation of class work by the class teacher. The class teacher will liaise with LS/RT and provide interventions that are additional to and different from those provided under the normal school curriculum.

Selection of Pupils for Learning Support

- From Senior Infants upwards, all pupils are screened annually, using appropriate standardised tests and at prescribed time by D.E.S.
- 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
- Teachers who have concerns regarding individual children will liaise with L/S and parents
- We are following the staged approach to assessment, identification and programme planning according to Special Ed 02/05.
 1. Pupils with learning needs at stage III (pupils with low incidence disabilities).
 2. Pupils with learning needs at stage III (pupils with high incidence disabilities).
 3. Pupils with learning needs at stage II (other special educational needs).
 4. Pupils with learning needs at stage II (literacy and numeracy).
 5. Pupils who display emotional and behavioural difficulties may also be considered as eligible for LS intervention

From September 2014 if concern remains after a number of reviews as outlined in Stage 1 report form, the learning support teacher may be consulted about the desirability of intervention during the year. (reviewed on a termly basis with class teachers).

Class teachers will retain a list of pupils with learning needs who are at stage I, stage II, stage III in their classroom.

Teachers will outline strategies utilized during stage 1.

Parental Involvement

The role of parents supporting the learning support for their children is vital to its success. Parents are required to sign a permission slip stating

that their child is allowed to attend learning support/resource. A letter will be sent out and signed by parents if learning support is to be discontinued.

Provision of Supplementary Teaching

- The primary work of the learning support teachers is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils identified above
- The school year will be divided into 2 instructional terms for ILP's and 2 instructional terms for IEP's
- The maximum case load at any one time shall be 20 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 Learning Plan (ILP) or Group Education Plan (GEP), in consultation with the principal and parents
- If a pupil is receiving support from a resource teacher in literacy / numeracy, s/he will not normally be provided with supplementary teaching from the learning support teacher as well.
- The learning support teachers will maintain the following documentation in individualised files:

1. Individual Profile and Learning programme
2. Weekly planning and programme record
3. Samples of written work
4. Reading analysis records
5. Results of standardised tests
6. Results of diagnostic tests
7. Relevant assessments

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
- Home support activities

Each plan will be monitored through teacher observation and the keeping of planning and progress records.

A detailed review will take place twice a year. The learning support teacher will meet the parents to discuss the child's progress in light of the review.

Complaints

If parents/carers have a complaint about the special educational provision made, then they should in the first instance make an appointment to speak to the learning support teacher and then the principal. The complaint will be investigated and dealt with as early as possible. If the matter is not resolved to the parent/carers satisfaction, procedures to be followed are outlined in the parental complaints policy.

Record Keeping

Learning support and resource teachers will maintain the following records:

1. IEP/ILP
2. Weekly Plans
3. Cuntais Miosiuil
4. Psychological reports and assessments are kept locked in the office to ensure confidentiality

Timetabling:

- The provision of learning support is a support to the regular class teaching in literacy and numeracy
- 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 learning support teacher.

Provision of Resources

- Resources for the provision of learning support include a variety of textbooks, library books and other materials. A variety of testing materials are also in use which include standardised, diagnostic,

screening, reading experience, reading attainment and phonological awareness.

- Following consultation between the learning support teacher, principal and class teacher, funding for materials may be available through the Board of Management
- Learning support resources will be primarily used by the learning support teachers. 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. A letter will be sent to parents if learning support is to be discontinued.
- The decision making process involves consultation between the class teacher, the learning support teacher, and the pupil's parents. An account is also taken of the overall learning support demands in the school.

Referral to out of School Agencies

- The principal co-ordinates the referral of pupils to outside agencies, e.g. educational psychologist
- 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

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Learning support is a collaborative responsibility shared by all partners. 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 of 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
- Keep teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedure to be followed in initiating services 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 we are following the staged approach to assessment, identification and programme planning according to Special Ed 02/05.

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 (Stage 1).
- Implement the school policies on screening and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in literacy and numeracy 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

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- For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, to adjust the classroom programmes in line with the agreed learning targets and activities
- Monthly plan of work in literacy and numeracy to be provided to the learning support teacher in advance.

Learning Support Teacher

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.

The role of the learning support teacher is to:

- Develop an individual profile and learning programme for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with the class teacher and parents
- Maintain planning and progress records or equivalent for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of learning support
- Provide teaching in literacy and numeracy 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.
- As advised during incidental inspection all LS teachers in our cluster will meet once a term to discuss approaches/assessments.

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 generally focused on children from Junior Infants to Rang 2.

Resource Teaching Policy

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.

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

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, may be 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. More specifically, the resource teacher has responsibility for:

- Developing IEP/ILP 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
- 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.

Implementation and Review

The plan will be implemented by the teacher and SNA's and supported by the Board of Management. It was reviewed in 2012 and 2014.

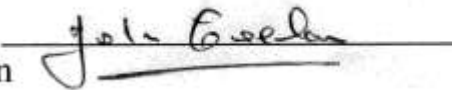
Ratification and Communication

This policy drafted by teachers was circulated to all parents. Parents were invited to submit any feedback / advice.

The policy was formally ratified by the Board of Management in 2010.

Reviewed: Oct 12, March 2014, date to be reviewed again will be 2016

Date to be reviewed 2016

Signed : 
Fr Geelan