



## Whole School Inclusion Policy

### Loreto College St. Stephen's Green

#### Introduction

This policy is drawn up in the context of The Education Act (1998) and takes cognisance of The Equal Status Act (2000), The Equality Act (2004), The Education Welfare Act (2000), The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003) and, despite its non-ratification by law, many of the recommendations of the EPSEN Act (2004). One further publication has informed the content of this policy- “Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs- Post Primary Guidelines (Department of Education & Science (DES) Inspectorate: 2007) and “Exceptionally Able Students-Draft Guidelines for Teachers” (NCCA: 2007). Its principles stem from the Mission Statement of the Loreto Order which highlights the fact that “all students are cherished equally, in a spirit of inclusiveness and respect”<sup>1</sup> and that “excellence appropriate to each student is aspired to and encouraged”<sup>2</sup>. The Board of Management is charged with a special responsibility by the Loreto Education Trust to “ensure an appropriate education for each student”<sup>3</sup>. The school’s own mission statement emphasises the fact that “each student is challenged to realise her full potential”.

#### Inclusion

Loreto College St Stephen’s Green welcomes students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and recognises “the need to provide that the education of people with such needs shall wherever possible take place in an inclusive environment”<sup>4</sup>It aims to ensure that these students are encouraged to participate in school life as far as is reasonably practicable<sup>5</sup> and that no student is bullied or singled out for unfair treatment as a consequence of her disability. Proactive steps are taken to ensure that the school provides an inclusive environment that is supportive and non –judgemental.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Educational Philosophy of Loreto Schools (2009)

<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup> Articles of Management for Loreto Secondary Schools 2010

<sup>4</sup> EPSEN Act (2004)

<sup>5</sup> Please refer to the Admissions Policy (available on the Website)

<sup>6</sup> Please see the Anti-bullying policy and the Code of Behaviour – available on the Website

As a fee-paying school, Loreto College St Stephen's Green is not entitled to a DES funded Learning Support Teacher. The Board of Management, as part of its commitment to the school's mission to provide for the needs of every child in its care, privately funds Learning Support for those students deemed to need it.

## **Rationale**

This policy document, which is regarded as a reflection of current practice, outlines the form that additional support for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) takes in the school and the philosophy which underpins our actions and decisions. The school bases its rationale on the three major principles laid out in the EPSEN Act:

- The education of people with SEN shall take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs.
- People with SEN shall have the same right to avail of and benefit from appropriate education, as do their peers.
- People with SEN, like their peers should leave school with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity, in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives.

## **Categories of Special Educational Needs<sup>7</sup>**

To date, the school has provided for the following categories of students with Special Educational Needs:

- Learning Support Students
- Borderline/ Mild General Learning Disability
- Emotional / Behavioural Difficulties—ADD/ADHD
- Specific Learning Difficulty—Dyslexia
- Physical disabilities—Dyspraxia,
- Mild Speech and Language Disorders
- Sensory Difficulties (hearing & visual impairments)
- ESOL students (English for students of other languages)
- Autism / Autistic Spectrum Disorder (e.g. Asperger's Syndrome)
  - A student identified as Exceptionally Able through a full educational psychological assessment.

In addition to these categories we understand that under DES circular 08/02 (Appendix 3) the following categories of SEN exist also and will be supported by the BOM, subject to available resources and personnel skills.

- Moderate General Learning Disability
- Severe / Profound General Learning Disability
- Downs Syndrome

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<sup>7</sup> Circular 08/02 DES

## **Roles within Resource/Learning Support Department**

All students and in particular students designated as having special needs are supported by the mainstream subject teacher. Depending on the learning needs of the student, she may also be helped in a small group, with team teaching, with individual learning support or resource teaching. In some cases the DES may provide the additional support of a Special Needs Assistant (SNA). The allocation of Resource hours is dependent upon the National Council of Special Needs (NCSE) and the DES. These hours are allocated under the General Allocation Model (Circular 13/2017) by the DES through the Special Education Needs Officer (SENO). Learning Support hours are privately funded by the Board of Management. This model of organisation includes consultation with the following;

- Students and parents
- Mainstream subject teacher
- Year head
- Guidance Counsellor
- Deputy Principal and Principal
- Relevant primary school
- National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) and other relevant professional agencies if appropriate

## **Implementation Procedures**

### **1. Initial Actions**

In the December preceding entry to First Year a letter is posted to all parents/guardians asking that the school be informed of any special learning/emotional or physical needs. Parents are requested to submit any psychological/educational assessments that have been carried out in the past and to inform the Principal if their daughter has availed of Learning Support or Resource Hours in Primary School.

Applications are made to the Special Education Needs Officer (SENO) for resource hours where appropriate.

The Learning Support team tries further to identify students who may need support by examining the results of incoming assessment tests in tandem with the earlier feedback from parents in December.

In early May the Learning Support Teacher or Guidance Counsellor contacts the primary schools of all the incoming First Years to help identify the strengths and challenges of each student. This further informs the Learning Support Team on who may need support.

### **2. Planning for Resources**

- a.** The Parents/Guardians of all students with special needs are invited to an individual meeting with the Deputy Principal/ Principal and Learning Support Teacher during the final term to plan for the following year.
- b.** The Learning Support Co-ordinator, in consultation with the Principal and Deputy Principal, compiles a register of students with special needs. The needs of each individual student is discussed and explained at a specially convened meeting of the teaching and library staff held in late August.

- c.** Individual tuition or small learning support groups are organised where appropriate. A learning plan is developed by the Learning Support teacher to help meet the student's needs.
  - d.** A Resource Teacher / (and /or) SNA is assigned to specific students depending on the allocation granted by the SENO and or by the BOM
3. Learning support in Action
- a.** The Learning Support Team offers advice on learning and teaching strategies for students with special needs. The team has access to an on-line staff resource library which provides literature, strategies and advice for all teachers.
  - b.** If the DES has made an advocate available to deal with special needs, the Learning Support Team will liaise with the advocate.
  - c.** National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) is consulted on an ongoing basis.
  - d.** Each subject department has developed guidelines on the provision for special needs in their subject area.
4. Provision for Students who wish to apply for Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations
- a. Individual appointments are arranged with students applying for Reasonable Accommodation for Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate (RACE). At Leaving Certificate level these appointments may include the NEPS psychologist who may carry out assessment tests to decide on the needs of each applicant.
  - b. Applications for RACE are processed by the Learning Support Co-ordinator in consultation with the Deputy Principal/Principal.
  - c. IEP and ILP are created by the Learning Support Team as directed by the SENO.

Class groups – mixed ability with banding in 2<sup>nd</sup> year for Maths, 3<sup>rd</sup> year for Irish and Maths

Senior Cycle mixed ability apart from Maths and Irish

Organisation of support

- Team teaching
- Small group withdrawal
- Individual withdrawal

Students may be on a reduced timetable with the agreement of the student and parents/guardians

### **The Exceptionally Able Student**

Students who require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for the general cohort of students are deemed to be exceptionally able.

Students may excel in various areas and the school will do whatever it can as an inclusive learning community to support them and encourage the development of their special abilities.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

While it is acknowledged that the care of students with SEN is the responsibility of all at Loreto College, there are some clearly identifiable roles to ensure a structured programme of support.

The Board of Management's role is

- To ensure that the policy is developed supported and evaluated.
- To consider reports from the Principal on the implementation of the policy and to consider any recommendations.
- To ensure adequate accommodation and teaching resources.

The Learning Support Team comprises the Learning Support Coordinator,, the Learning Support teacher, the Principal and Deputy Principal.

The Learning Support Team's role is

- To create and foster a school climate of inclusiveness.
- To meet parents of incoming students with SEN.
- To keep abreast of all developments in the area of SEN.
- To establish structures and procedures for the implementation of the policy.
- To ensure that Reasonable Accommodation is sought and where possible provided, for SEN students sitting State Examinations.
- To inform staff of individual students' needs.
- To plan a Learning Support timetable.
- To monitor and evaluate individual students/groups of students with SEN.
- To gather and record evidence of students' progress through formal and informal assessments.

The Pastoral Team's role is

- To monitor the effects of the policy and help to identify students requiring learning support.
- To refer to outside professionals and agencies as needed.
- To counsel in personal, educational and career development.
- To consult with parents and teachers.

The Subject teacher's role is

- To create a classroom environment that accommodates and takes cognisance of learning difficulties.
- To differentiate his/ her teaching practice.
- To assist in the identification of students in need of Learning Support.
- To bring any concerns to the SEN department.

Parents are expected and encouraged

- From the date of offer of a place in the school for their daughter to contact the school to discuss their child's special needs so that the school can commence planning appropriate accommodation and support services.
- To be proactive and supportive of the school in implementing this policy.
- To use their unique knowledge of their daughter to further her learning plan.
- To meet with teachers, learning support team or pastoral team where appropriate.
- To provide support for homework and learning.

Students are encouraged

- To engage positively with their learning plan, both at the planning and review stage.
- To participate in their learning in a group, individual or class setting in a positive manner.
- To develop ownership of the skills and strategies taught in a Learning Support setting.

Special Needs Assistant

The role of the SNA is pivotal in the care of students with SEN and is recognised by the whole school community as being of enormous value. The duties of the SNA are outlined by the DES<sup>8</sup> as follows:-

1. Preparation and tidying up of classroom(s) in which the pupil(s) with special needs is/are being taught.
2. Assisting children to board and alight from school buses. Where necessary travel as escort on school buses may be required.
3. Special assistance as necessary for pupils with particular difficulties e.g. helping physically disabled pupils with typing or writing.
4. Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene.
5. Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks and similar activities.
6. Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods.
7. Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom.
8. General assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the Principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature.
9. Where a Special Needs Assistant has been appointed to assist a school in catering for a specific pupil, duties should be modified to support the particular needs of that child.

### **Monitoring and Review Procedures**

1. The Learning Support Team meets on a fortnightly basis to discuss relevant issues.
2. The Learning Support Team and Special Needs Assistants meet on a fortnightly basis to discuss students' progress.
3. Applications for special educational resources take place on an on- going basis with the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO).
4. Regular meetings with parents take place for students with special needs to collaborate and agree on Individual Learning Plans.
5. Consultations take place with NEPS psychologist on a regular basis.
6. Students with SEN discuss their needs and how best those needs can be served with their teachers/ Learning Support teachers regularly.

This policy was revised by the Learning Support Team of Loreto College St Stephen's Green in consultation with parents and teachers and was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2018. It will be reviewed yearly with a major review scheduled for 2021.

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<sup>8</sup> Circular 07/02 DES