Special Educational Needs Policy

Killeen N.S.

The purpose of this Special Education Needs (SEN) policy document is to provide information to school personnel and parents on how we organise provision for teaching and support of children with special educational needs. The term special educational needs is broad and includes children who have difficulty acquiring literacy and/or numeracy skills, children with difficulties with fine or gross motor skills, children who have English as an additional language (if that impacts on their progress) and children who have diagnosed disabilities.

This policy is informed by the following DE documents:

- Circular 13/2017 Circular to the Management Authorities of all Mainstream Primary Schools Special Education Teaching Allocation .
- Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (2017).
- Special Educational Needs – A Continuum of Support (NEPS 2007).
- Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties – A Continuum of Support (NEPS).

1. School Context

Killeen N.S. caters for children from Junior Infants to 6th Class and is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. The school currently has 4 mainstream class teachers, 1 Special Class Teacher and 1 full-time and 1 shared Special Education teachers. The school has 5 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). The allocation of both Special Education teachers and Special Needs Assistants is subject to review.

2. Aims of SEN Support

Our school is committed to helping our pupils achieve their full potential. The provision of a quality system of SEN support teaching is integral to this commitment.

Through the implementation of our SEN policy we aim to:

- support the inclusion of children with SEN in our school
- develop positive attitudes about school and learning in our children
- ensure that the Staged Approach/Continuum of Support is implemented
- optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable children with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school
- enable children to participate in the full curriculum
- support appropriate differentiation in the classroom
- support children's development both socially and emotionally
- enable children to understand themselves as learners
- involve parents in supporting their children
- promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole-school policies on learning support for our pupils

- promote early intervention programmes designed to enhance learning and prevent/reduce difficulties in learning

3. **Principles of SEN Support**

The provision of SEN support in our school is based on the following principles:

- 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.
- The resources provided to support pupils with special educational needs will be used to facilitate the development of a truly inclusive school.
- Supports provided to pupils with special educational needs will be based on identified needs and be informed by regular reviews of progress (in consultation with parents and pupils) as outlined in the Continuum of Support Guidelines.
- The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all pupils in the classroom, including pupils with special educational needs.
- Pupils with the **greatest levels of need will have access to the greatest level of support**, and whenever possible, these pupils will be supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The role of supporting learning is a collaborative responsibility shared by all the school community: The Board of Management, principal teacher, parents, class teachers, special education teachers, SNAs, children and external bodies and agencies.

Board of Management

The Board of Management will:

- oversee the development, implementation and review of school policy on support for children with additional needs
- provide adequate class accommodation and teaching resources
- provide a secure facility for storage of records

Principal Teacher

The principal has overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of provision. She will work closely with school staff and will keep the BOM informed about the working of this policy. It will be the role of the principal to:

- develop inclusive whole-school policies and monitor their implementation
- assign staff strategically to teaching roles, including special education roles
- co-ordinate teachers' work to ensure continuity of provision for all pupils
- ensure that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, pupils and external professionals/agencies
- ensure that effective systems are implemented to identify pupils' needs and that progress is monitored methodically
- facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to education of pupils with special educational needs, and ensure that all school

staff (class teachers, special education teachers and special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area
- maintain a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching
- select children for psychological assessment in consultation with class and support teachers and with NEPS
- liaise with external agencies such as NEPS to arrange assessments of children with SEN
- liaise with SENO regarding all aspects of special education provision
- arrange for exemptions from the study of Irish for pupils for whom this is appropriate

Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all children in his/her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching.

The class teacher will:

- create a positive learning environment within the classroom
- differentiate teaching strategies, approaches and expectations to the range of experiences, abilities, needs and learning styles in their class
- meet with parents regarding any concerns about their child and update them regarding their progress
- gather information and assess children presenting with needs to inform teaching and learning using the Continuum of Support
- open a Student Support File once additional needs have been identified and require Classroom Support
- develop Classroom Support plans for children in receipt of Classroom Support
- collaborate with Special Education Teachers to develop School Support Plans and School Support Plus Plans for each pupil in receipt of School Support and School Support Plus
- meet with Special Education Teachers, parents/guardians and other staff members to identify priority learning goals for each pupil in receipt of School Support and School Support Plus
- meet with Special Education Teachers, relevant staff to review Support Plans
- where applicable, collaborate with the SET team regarding teaching aims and activities for team teaching
- administer and correct standardised tests of achievement in literacy and numeracy, following the school's guidelines in collaboration with SET team
- discuss outcomes of standardised testing with SET team to assist in the selection of children for supplementary teaching
- co-ordinate the role and responsibilities of the SNA in relation to the needs of pupils with SEN within the class(es) to which they are assigned

Special Education Teachers (SET)

The central roles of the SET will be to:

a) support the class teacher in optimising teaching and learning opportunities and

b) provide specialised teaching to those children with identified special educational needs.

The SET will:

- familiarise themselves with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and to meet a variety of needs
- assist in the implementation of a broad range of whole school strategies aimed at prevention and early intervention
- meet with class teachers, parents/guardians and other staff members to review and develop School Support Plans and to identify priority learning goals for pupils in receipt of School Support or School Support Plus
- monitor the ongoing progress of each child in receipt of supplementary teaching in relation to the attainment of agreed learning targets
- maintain planning and progress records for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of school support
- update and maintain the Student Support Files of pupils in receipt of School Support and School Support Plus
- administer and interpret diagnostic tests and inform class teachers and parents of the outcomes
- meet with parents regarding any concerns about their child and update them regarding their progress
- administer a range of formal and informal assessments and maintaining records of the outcomes of those assessments
- contribute to the development of SEN policy
- provide advice to the class teacher (if requested)
- liaise with external agencies such as speech and language therapists etc., and implementing suitable recommendations, wherever possible

Special Class Teacher

The special class teacher helps to provide an education which meets the needs and abilities of children who meet criteria for enrolment into the special class. The SCT teaches children (maximum 6) in Sunbeams. In addition, the SCT will advise and liaise with other teachers, parents and other professionals in the pupil's interests. More specifically, the special class teacher has responsibility for:

- being the main point of contact for the child's parents/guardians
- involving parents in the educational process, e.g. School Support Plus, home school communication diaries etc
- preparing a pupil's School Support File in consultation with parents and in liaison with other staff working with the child
- initiating a review of the School Support Plus Plan mid-year and organising venue, date and time to consult with parents and SNAs
- planning and implementing educational provision for children enrolled in the class. School Support Plus Plans being used as long-term planning and fortnightly plans for short-term planning to enable progression over time
- co-ordinating the supporting work of the Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) on an ongoing basis

- working with the mainstream class teacher to identify regular opportunities for integration or reverse integration, where appropriate
- working with the mainstream class teacher to identify and implement accommodations that the child with additional needs may need to be successful in the mainstream classroom, where appropriate
- upholding the Code of Behaviour of the school, where appropriate

Role of SNA

The role of an SNA will be to carry out duties based on the care needs of the child. The tasks associated with these duties can be of a primary or secondary nature. (Circular 0030/2014)

The primary care support tasks may include:

- Administration of medicine.
- Assistance with toileting and general hygiene.
- Assistance with mobility and orientation.
- Assisting teachers to provide supervision in the class, playground and school grounds, and at recreation, assembly and dispersal times.
- Assisting children while at play as appropriate.
- Provision of care needs associated with specific medical conditions.
- Care needs requiring frequent interventions including withdrawal of a child from a classroom when essential.
- Assistance with moving and lifting of children, operation of hoists and equipment.
- Assistance with severe communication difficulties including enabling curriculum access for children with physical disabilities or sensory needs and those with significant, and identified social and emotional difficulties. The secondary care support tasks may include:
- Preparation and tidying of workspaces and classrooms or assisting a child who is not physically able to perform such tasks; to prepare and tidy a workspace, to present materials, to display work, or to transition from one lesson activity to another.
- Assistance with the development of Personal Pupil Plans (PPP) for children with Special Educational Needs, with a particular focus on developing a care plan to meet the care needs of the child concerned and the review of such plans.
- Planning for activities and classes where there may be additional care requirements associated with particular activities.
- Assistance with enabling a child to access therapy or psycho-educational programmes under the direction of appropriate personnel.
- Assistance to attend or participate in out of school activities: walks, or visits, where such assistance cannot be provided by teaching staff.

Role of Parents/Guardians

The central role of parents/guardians of children with SEN is the same as all parents/guardians, i.e to support the work of the school and to optimise teaching and

learning opportunities for their child at home. The Continuum of Support process and use of the Student Support File provide valuable opportunities to engage with parents and to build a collaborative approach to identifying and responding to the needs of pupils with special educational needs.

When we identify a child as having additional needs we expect the child's parents/guardians to help us to explore all possibilities to help the child to achieve his/her potential. Any parent who refuses our support or refuses to access School Support/School Support Plus or SNA support will have to sign a disclaimer saying they understand that the school has offered support and that they are turning it down.

Parents and guardians can prepare for and support the work of the school by:

- Supervising, assisting with and showing interest in homework.
- Reading and telling stories to their child/children.
- Listening to and giving supportive feedback on oral reading.
- Where their child is in receipt of supplementary teaching, implementing suggested home-based activities and discussing the outcomes with the child's teachers.
- Signing and returning consent forms to the school regarding withdrawal for support teaching.
- Talking positively about school and school work.
- Keeping the class teacher informed of any home factors which may be affecting their child's progress.
- Participating in activities organised by the school that are designed to increase the involvement of parents in their children's learning.
- Helping children to develop their organisational skills.
- Helping children to look after school books and other resources which are loaned to the children for use at home.
- Supporting programmes and initiatives implemented by the school

Role of Children

The role of the child with SEN will be that of active participant in their own learning; the extent and nature of this will depend on their strengths and needs.

Role of External Bodies and Agencies

Our school liaises with external professionals such as NEPS Psychologists, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Support Service, the HSE (Health Service Executive), Early Intervention Teams, School Age Teams, Tusla, Visiting Teachers for children with vision impairment, Visiting Teachers for children with hearing loss, and the Inspectorate.

We acknowledge that the needs of many children span both health and education services. We therefore liaise with and contribute to health-led assessment and delivery of interventions and facilitate meetings between parents and various support services. We also endeavour to incorporate relevant recommendations from health professionals in developing support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support.

5. Prevention and Early Intervention Strategies

We believe it is very important to identify and assess children with special needs as early as possible so that effective interventions can be put in place. The use of early intervention and prevention programmes helps mitigate the development of learning, social and emotional difficulties. Early intervention programmes may be provided by the class teacher and/or the special education teacher, in accordance with the staged approach outlined in the Continuum of Support. Collaboration and consultation between the class teachers and the SETs should identify children who may be in need of early intervention. Teacher observation and professional opinion will be given due consideration in the selection of children for early intervention programmes at Classroom Support/School Support level.

We use the following prevention and early intervention strategies:

- Ongoing structured observation and assessment of the language, literacy and numeracy skills of pupils in the infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties.
- Observation of pupils' social interactions and behaviour in the classroom and the yard to facilitate early identification of social, emotional and behavioural needs.
- The M.I.S.T. (Middle Infants Screening Test) is administered to all pupils in Senior Infants during the second term of the school year.
- Provision of additional support in language development and any relevant early literacy and mathematical skills to pupils who need it.
- In class support and team teaching e.g. Aistear.
- Close collaboration and consultation between the infant teacher and the SET team.
- Differentiation of the curriculum by the mainstream class teacher to cater for individual strengths and needs.
- Withdrawal of individuals/groups for extra support where required.
- The development of agreed approaches to the teaching of literacy and numeracy in order to ensure progression and continuity from class to class.
- Parental involvement in promoting literacy and numeracy e.g. homework.

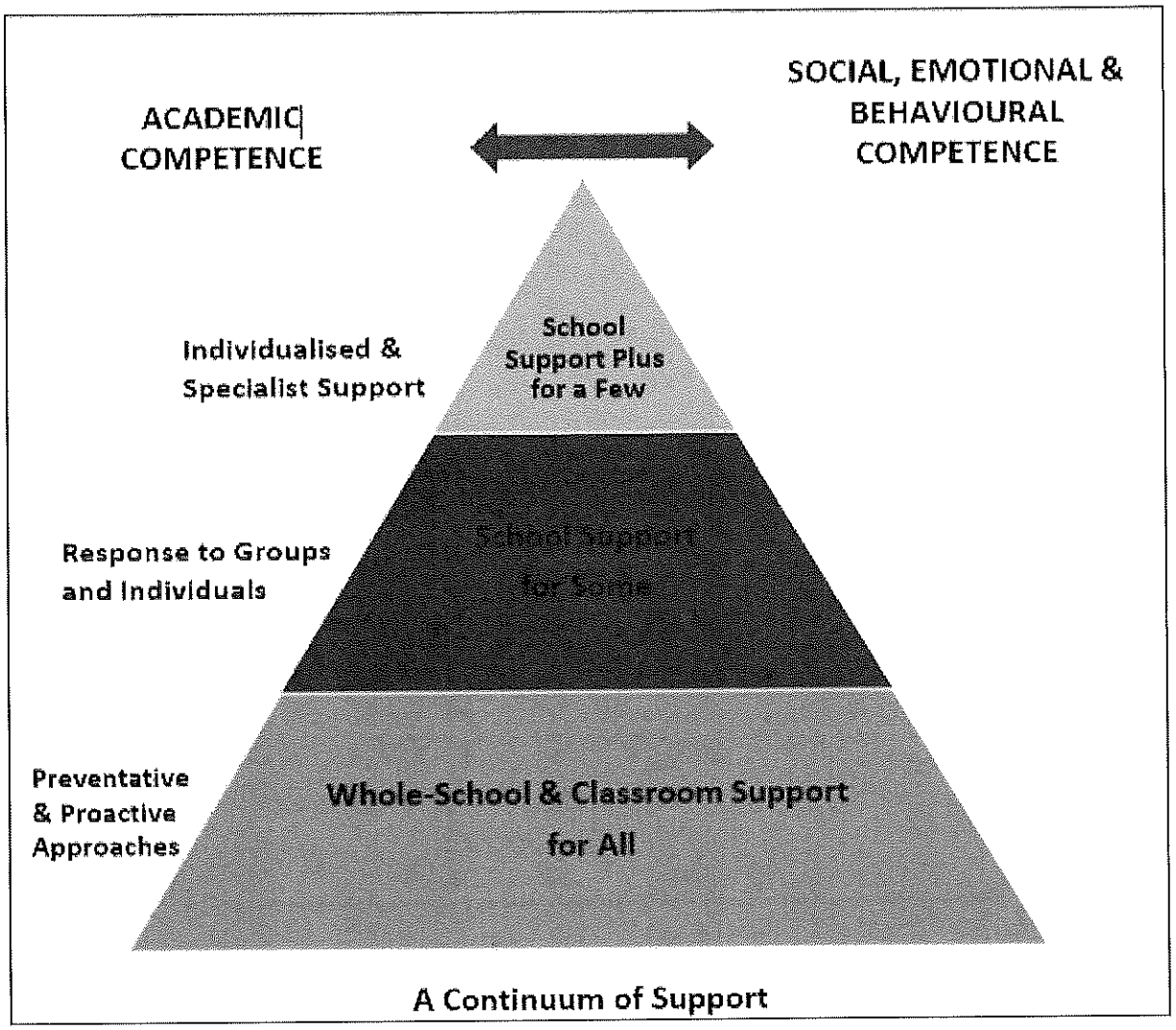
6. Identifying Pupils with Additional Needs

We use the Continuum of Support Framework set out by the Department of Education to identify and support children with additional needs. Like this framework, we recognise that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long-term and that pupils require different levels of support depending on their identified additional needs. By using this framework, it helps us implement a staged approach to ensure that our support and interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support, and are informed by careful monitoring of progress.

The Continuum of Support is a problem-solving model of assessment and intervention that enables us to gather and analyse data, as well as to plan and review the progress of individual pupils.

Identification of educational needs is central to our policy and the new allocation model. By using the Continuum of Support framework, we can identify pupils' educational needs, to include academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. This, in turn, allows us to identify and respond to needs in a flexible way.

The Continuum of Support suggests the following levels of support:



STAGE 1 CLASSROOM SUPPORT

Classroom Support is the most common, and typically the first response to emerging needs. It is a response for pupils who have distinct or individual educational needs and who require approaches to learning and/or behaviour which are **additional to or different** from those required by other pupils in their class. Problem-solving at this level typically begins when a parent or teacher has concerns about an individual pupil. The class teacher and parents discuss the nature of the problem and consider strategies which may be effective. The class teacher may seek advice from Special Education Teachers at this stage. Classroom Support incorporates the simple, informal problem-solving approaches commonly used by class teachers to support emerging needs.

STAGE 2 SCHOOL SUPPORT

In some cases, interventions at classroom support level are not enough to fully meet the pupil's special educational needs. If standardised test results and teacher observation indicate this to be the case, School Support may, therefore, be required. The class

teacher involves the Special Education Teacher Team (SET Team) in the problem-solving process at this point and it involves more systematic gathering of information and the development and monitoring of a School Support Plan. Where progress is such that the child is no longer giving cause for concern, the child will revert to the usual differentiated curriculum available to all children.

STAGE 3 SCHOOL SUPPORT PLUS

If a pupil's special educational needs are **severe and/or persistent**, they are likely to need intensive support. If interventions at classroom support and school support levels are not enough to fully meet the child's special education needs, a School Support Plus plan is required. School Support Plus will generally involve personnel outside the school team in the problem solving, assessment and intervention process. An assessment may be arranged at this point from a relevant and suitably qualified professional to provide more information to help the school and parents to meet the needs of the child. If the child is assessed as having care needs then the child will require SNA support. Where it is recommended that a child requires specialised equipment the school will make an application for this equipment and arrange for the use of this equipment to be demonstrated to the relevant staff. However, the information from Classroom and School Support work will provide the starting point for problem-solving at this level.

7. Meeting Children's Additional Learning Needs

Once pupils' needs have been identified they may be supported in a variety of ways. Children at Classroom Support level will be supported in the classroom by the class teacher. Special education teachers and class teachers will work together to support children at School Support and School Support Plus level. This support may take the form of in-class support or withdrawal of groups/individuals. Interventions will be planned to address pupils' priority learning needs and to achieve the targets identified in the relevant Continuum of Support plan. We take into account the different backgrounds, experiences, interests and strengths that influence the way in which children learn when we plan our approaches to teaching and learning.

8. Monitoring and Reviewing Progress

Pupils' progress in relation to achieving their targets will be regularly and carefully monitored. This stage of the process is informed by effective measurement of baseline performance, including the use of criterion-referenced tests and other methods of assessment (for example, teacher-designed tests, checklists, samples of work, observation) that allow pupils to demonstrate their progress. This will lead to the establishment of specific targets to be achieved within a defined timeframe.

Monitoring outcomes is part of a dynamic process of identification, target-setting, intervention and review, which in turn should lead to adjustments in support plans. The Student Support File will be used to support and record this process. It includes a Support Review Record to guide teachers when monitoring progress and reviewing outcomes with parents and pupils. Such monitoring of progress, and subsequent adaptation of support plans, are key drivers of effective practice.

In addition to monitoring outcomes at the individual level, it is also important to review outcomes at group, class and whole-school level. This review will include some of the

following measures: attainment, communication, independence, attendance, social inclusion and well-being (for example, sense of belonging and connectedness to school) for pupils with special educational needs.

9. Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching.

School Support and School Support Plus Plans will be reviewed in September/October and February. A decision will be made regarding the continued level of support and revised targets will be set in the Support Plan. Supplementary teaching may be discontinued when satisfactory progress has been made and targets have been met.

10. Record Keeping

Student Support File

We use student support files on Aladdin. We store pupil information, assessments, work samples and reports from external agencies in pupil files in the office (locked filing cabinet).

Student Support Files for pupils at Classroom Support level will be maintained by the class teacher. If the pupil progresses to School Support or School Support Plus level the file will be passed to the relevant SET.

11. SEN Policy Success Criteria

A whole school approach to the implementation of our SEN policy will:

- ensure that children with SEN gain access to a broad, balanced curriculum and have opportunity of access to an appropriate education
- develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning among our pupils
- improve standards of academic performance and achievement
- enhance parental involvement in supporting their child's learning
- increase collaboration between school personnel

The achievement of these success criteria will be assessed through: feedback from teachers, children and parents/guardians; child's achievements and ongoing analysis of children's academic performance and attainment of personal targets.

This Special Education Needs policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 17th February 2024.

Signed: Maireád Staunton **Signed:** Brid Grady

Chairperson of BOM Principal/Secretary to the BOM