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Whole School Policy for Special Educational Needs in St. Colmcille's N.S.

St. Colmcille's N.S. is situated in the scenic village of Rathcormac at the foot of beautiful Benbulbin. The school has 244 pupils with a catchment area that extends from Sligo town to Glencar, and on to Lissadell. There are 13 teachers in the school, with nine classes, 2.9 S.E.T positions, a walking principal and 2 SNA's.

Beliefs and Principles

As stated in our school mission statement, we want to ensure that each child in our school reaches his/her full potential. We recognise that Special Educational teaching has an integral role to play in this.

We have an expectation that every child on leaving primary level in this school will have acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills. We also believe that the earlier the problems are identified and addressed, the greater the chance that our intervention will be successful. The Special Education teachers will use resources that are specially designed for children who are experiencing difficulties, together with teacher designed materials. They will work at the pace of the individual child not necessarily at the child's class level, and endeavour to adapt resources and methodologies to the needs of the child.

The following principles will underpin the provision of the learning programmes:

1. Effective whole school policies and parental involvement
2. Prevention of failure
3. Provision of intensive early intervention
4. Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need.

Aims of The Special Educational Team

The principal aim of S.E.T is to optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.

In order to achieve this aim the following subsidiary aims must be taken into consideration –

1. To enable these pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level.
2. To develop positive self esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in these pupils.
3. To enable these pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners.
4. To provide supplementary teaching and additional support in English and Maths.
5. To involve parents in supporting their children through effective support programmes.
6. To promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole-school policies on S.E.N for these pupils.
7. To establish early intervention programmes designed to enhance learning and to prevent or reduce these difficulties.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

The role of S.E.N. is a collaborative responsibility shared by all – the Board of Management, Principal, S.E.T., class teachers, parents and children. It is important that everyone contributes in the planning and implementation of our school plan on special education.

Role of Board of Management

1. To oversee the development, implementation and review of the provision of S.E.N. in our school.
2. To ensure adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the S.E.T.
3. Provide a secure facility for storage of records of pupils in receipt of S.E.N. Support

Role of Principal

1. Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policies on S.E.N.
2. Work with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan on S.E.N.
3. Monitor the implementation of the school plan on S.E.N. on an on-going basis.
4. Monitor the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with very low achievement.
5. Assume overall responsibility for co-ordinating S.E.N. services. The principal will contact relevant outside agencies with parental consent.
6. 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 services they need.
7. Keep teachers informed about the external assessments services that are available and to procedures to be followed in initiating referrals.
8. Help teachers increase their knowledge and skills in the area of Special Education..

Role of Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all the pupils in his/her class including those selected for supplementary teaching. In supporting the development and implementation of the school plan on special education the class teacher should.

1. Implement teaching programmes, which optimise the learning of all pupils and to the greater possible extent, prevent the emergence of learning difficulties.
2. Implement the school policies on screening and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in English and maths from senior infants to 6th class by administering and scoring appropriate screening measures.
3. For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, collaborate with the S.E.T. in the development of an individual profile and learning programme by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve these targets.
4. For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, adjust the classroom programme in line with the agreed learning targets and activities.
5. With regard to teaching pupils with low achievements, the following general approaches and methods are recommended.
 - Group teaching
 - Modify presentation and questioning techniques to maximise the involvement of pupils with low achievements in class activities.
 - Placing emphasis on oral language development across the curriculum.
 - Setting 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.

A key to successful Special Education Teaching is a very high level of consultation and co-operation between the class teacher and S.E.T. The development, implementation and review of Individual Profiles and Learning Programmes will be the subject of this consultation. The time necessary for consultation and collaboration will be taken into consideration in the drawing up of timetables for the S.E.T.

Role of the S.E.T.

The role of S.E.T. should include.

1. Assisting in the implementation of a broad range of whole-school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to prevent learning difficulties.
2. Development of an individual profile and learning programme for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching, in consultation with the class teacher and parents.
3. Meet with parents of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching to discuss targets and ways in which attainment of the targets can be supported at home.
4. Maintaining a weekly planning and progress record or equivalent for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of S.E.N.
5. Delivering intensive early intervention and providing supplementary teaching in English and Maths to pupils in the junior section of the school (Junior Infants to First Class)
6. Providing teaching in English and Maths to pupils in the senior section of the school who experience low achievement

7. Administration of diagnostic tests. Interpretation of the outcomes of the assessments in consultation with the class teacher, and consideration of the most appropriate form of intervention for the pupil.
8. Co-ordinating the implementation of whole-school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching in line with the selection criteria specified in the school plan.
9. Contributing to the development of policy on S.E.N. at the whole-school level.
10. Providing advice to class teachers in such areas as individual pupil assessment and programme planning, as well as approaches to language development, reading, writing and mathematics for pupils experiencing difficulties.
11. Contributing at school level to decision making regarding the purchases of learning resources, books and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms and in the S.E.T's room.
12. Performing a defined role in co-ordinating the provision of S.E.N. services in the school.
13. Liaising with external agencies such as Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists and Psychologists to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs.
14. Establish a tracking/recording system for when children leave S.E.N. support. Monitor scores achieved in later standardised tests and review.

Role of SNA

Special Needs Assistants are recruited specifically to assist schools in providing the necessary non-teaching services to pupils with assessed educational needs. Their duties are assigned by the Principal acting on behalf of the Board of Management. Their work is supervised either by the Principal or another teacher as determined by the principal. Those duties involve tasks of a non-teaching nature such as:

1. Preparation and tidying up of classrooms
2. Assisting school children on board and alight from school buses. Where necessary travel as escort during school hours on buses may be required.
3. Special assistance as necessary for children with particular difficulties e.g. helping special needs pupils with typing or writing or computers or other use of equipment.
4. Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene and being mindful of health and safety needs of the pupil
5. Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks, examinations and similar activities.
6. Assisting the teacher in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreation and dispersal from the classroom for one reason or another.
7. Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporary from the classroom for one reason or another.
8. General assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the Principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature. (Special needs assistants may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class or group of children)
9. Participation with school development planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school, development process.
10. Engagement with parents of special needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by school management.
11. Other duties appropriate to the grade may be determined by the needs of the pupils, and the school from time to time. Special needs Assistants may be re-assigned to other work appropriate to the grade when special needs pupils are absent or when particular urgent work demands arise.

Prevention Strategies

Our strategies for the prevention of learning difficulties are:

1. Development of agreed approaches to language development, the teaching of spelling, reading, handwriting, phonics, phonological awareness, comprehension strategies, and to the teaching of other aspects of English and Mathematics in order to ensure progression and continuity from class to class (Plean Scoile)
2. Provision of additional support in language development and relevant early literacy and mathematical skills to pupils who need it.
3. Implementation of paired reading programmes involving adults/parents and pupils in the school
4. Using a Reading Buddy system either within, or by mixing classes.
5. Ongoing structured observation and assessment of the language, literacy and numerical skills of the pupils in the infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties.
6. Providing a print-rich environment, both in the classroom and in communal areas.
7. Since many children with special needs may also have needs in relation to their behaviour and socialisation skills, references is made here to the positive behaviour policy of the school (Discipline Policy)
8. The promotion of a positive attitude towards the learning of Mathematics through a number of whole-school strategies including the provision of suitable Maths games for each class, and the development of such games in a “Maths Challenge Week”

Early Intervention Strategies

The implementation of intensive early intervention programmes in the early primary classes is an effective response to meeting the needs of children with low achievements. These programmes will have some of the following characteristics:

1. Early Intervention on a daily basis. Involve small group teaching or one –to –one teaching when small group teaching has not been effective.
2. To work intensively as a S.E.T. planning, implementing and assessing these programmes.
3. Be based on a shared expectation of success by everybody involved.
4. Be intensive in terms of frequency of lessons, and the pace of instruction.
5. Include a strong focus on the development of oral language, laying the foundation of meaningful reading activities and further development of language and development skills.
6. Emphasise the development of phonemic awareness and a range of other word identification skills
7. Engage pupil in frequent supervised oral and silent reading of texts at appropriate levels of difficulty, and monitor their comprehension of these texts
8. Stress the interconnected nature of listening, speaking, reading and writing.
9. In Mathematics, focus on language development and the development of mathematical procedures and concepts.

Types of Supplementary Teaching

It is the policy of the school to exercise flexibility in the variety of ways that supplementary teaching is provided. The types of supplementary teaching include:

1. Withdrawal from class
2. One-to-one teaching
3. In class support – whole class
4. In-class support – small groups (class teacher may observe, or may work with the small group)
5. In-class support – individual child
6. Team teaching
7. Provision of specialised resource when needed, e.g. Assistive Technology.

Protocols for Team – Teaching

In order to collaborate effectively in team-teaching the following areas will be considered.

Teaching Methodologies

The Methodology will be decided on and agreed upon by all team members from the outset. Regular checks through discussion will help to maintain clarity and affirm aspects that are working well, and aspect that require amendment. The use of consistent language will be attempted.

Homework:

A consistent routine around homework will be decided upon.

It will be clear who sets and checks homework, and how homework will be differentiated.

Discipline

A consistent approach towards discipline will be adopted

Planning Meetings

Regular short planning meetings will be held in order to review programme content, methodologies, homework and progress.

Assessment and Reporting

Identification and selection of pupils for supplementary teaching

The school will follow the Staged Approach to Assessment and Identification as outlined in Circular Sp. Ed. 02/05

Stage 1

The class teacher, having concerns about the progress of a pupil will draw up a short simple plan for extra help to be implemented in the classroom.

A first step in identifying pupils who may need S.E.N. support in English or mathematics is for the class teacher to administer one or more screening measures. These screening measures will be relevant to the age and stage of development of the pupils. In general, screening checklists, rating

scales, screening profiles or curriculum profiles will be used throughout the school. The following standardised screening tests (subject to review) will also be used:

Junior Infants/Senior Infants	Drumcondra Early Literacy Test	May/June
1 st Class	N.R.I.T.	October
1 st to 6 th Classes	Drumcondra Primary Reading Test	May/June
	And	
	Drumcondra Primary Mathematics Test	

Stage 2

At this stage the pupil is referred to the S.E.T. for further diagnostic testing.

The Parents of the child will be contacted initially by the Class teacher. If this diagnostic testing suggests that supplementary teaching would be beneficial, this will be arranged. A learning programme will be drawn up by parents, class teacher and S.E.T.

Stage 3

For children who continue to present with significant learning needs, the school may request a consultation, and where appropriate an assessment with a specialist outside the school. A learning programme will then be devised, with consultation by all relevant bodies.

In the case of a pupil identified at an early age as having very significant special education needs, intervention at Stage 3 will be necessary from their entry into school.

Diagnostic Assessment

In order to determine the pupil's strengths and needs in aspects of English and /or mathematics, and to assess the level at which intervention should begin, diagnostic testing will be carried out. The following diagnostic tools are among those used in the school:

Aston Index
Diagnostic Reading Test
Renfrew Language Scales Vocab Test
MALT
PERA
BIAP
Early Literacy Test
Middle Infant Screening Test
Bangor Dyslexia Test
PEP 3
Sound Linkage

Priority for S.E.N. Support will be given to children in the following order

1. Children with Priority Needs.
2. Children performing at the 10th percentile or below in standardised test of achievement in English
3. Early Intervention – English (Infants to 1st class) based on class teacher's observations and recommendations.
4. Children performing at the 10th percentile or below in standardised tests of achievement in Mathematics
5. Children with completed assessments from outside agencies e.g. Speech and Language
6. Pupils performing below the 20th percentile in standardised tests of achievement in English.

7. Pupils performing below the 20th percentile in standardised tests of achievement in Mathematics.
8. Children above the 25th percentile are not normally entitled to S.E.N. Support.
9. Arrangements for the provision of supplementary teaching to pupil's in the senior section who experience very low achievement.
10. The duration of supplementary teaching should not exceed two to three years.

Programme Planning and Implementation

- The outcome of diagnostic testing carried out by the S.E.T. will be discussed with the pupil's class teacher.
- Targets will be identified.
- An individual IPLP/IEP will be developed by the S.E.T. in consultation with the class teacher.
- Appropriate modification of teaching approaches will be undertaken by the class teacher in order to allow for differentiation in the mainstream classroom.
- The most effective type of intervention will be decided on:
- Withdrawal of individuals or small groups etc.
- Planning and recording using the relevant records.

Timetable

- Supplementary teaching is in addition to class teaching.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that student will not miss the same curricular area each time they have S.E.N. support.
- Considerable emphasis will be placed on classroom based intervention.

Programme Review at the end of each Instructional Term

- The children will be assessed on an on-going basis, using a wide range of assessment materials, both formal and informal. These assessment and class tests will be used to assess the child's progress, and ascertain the benefit of continuing support, or a change of approach.
- The learning programmes will be assessed on an on-going basis to evaluate their appropriateness.
- Consultation with class teacher, S.E.T. and parents will be a very important part of the review.
- Decisions will be made regarding the level of support now required by the pupil.

Continuation/Discontinuation of Supplementary Teaching

Following the evaluation of the pupil's progress the IPLP/IEP may need to be revised. Any pupil with whom supplementary teaching is being discontinued will continue to be monitored through observation of their performance in standardised tests and teacher observation.

Monitoring Progress

- The child's progress will be monitored using weekly planning progress record, and a wide range of assessment tools (as already stated)
- A detailed review at the end of the instructional term will inform the future programme for the child.
- A comprehensive review of pupils who do not make expected progress will be undertaken, with referrals made to outside agencies where appropriate.

Record Keeping

- Records will be kept of test results, diagnostic tests, samples of work, on-going assessments and observations.
- A copy of the child's IPLP or IEP will be kept in their file.
- The weekly planning and progress record will also be retained and up-dated.
- All records will be kept in a secure location i.e. in filing cabinet.

Communication

Liaising with Parents

Effective communication with parents is critically important to the success of a S.E.N. programme.

- Parents will be asked to contribute to the initial diagnostic assessment by sharing information and insights regarding their child's learning. Regular meetings with parents of children with IEP.
- They will be invited to discuss the outcome of the initial assessment.
- Their contribution to the selection of targets will be valued
- Parents will be invited to observe particular learning activities.

Activities will be organised to increase the involvement of parents in supporting their children's learning, in the implementation of whole-school prevention strategies. These activities may include:

- Paired/shared reading
- Book Fair
- Attendance at information evenings on Reading or Mathematics
- Involvement in the Maths Games
- Attendance at information meetings for parents of children starting school.

Liaising with Support Team

In order to ensure good communication between the members of the Support Team, regular team meetings will be scheduled.

Liaising with Teacher

The importance of liaison between Support teacher and Class teacher has already been emphasized. In order to facilitate this, meetings between the S.E.T and class teachers will be arranged with cover for the relevant classes provided by Principal.

Liaising with Principal

On-going communication with the Principal is essential to ensure progress. This communication will be both oral and written.

Transition to other Schools

The parents of children who have been in receipt of support and are transferring to other schools will be given any relevant records, and furnished with the relevant information to ensure continuity and consistency in their support.

In order to ensure the smooth transition of 6th class pupils to Secondary School there will be close liaison between the Class Teacher and the S.E.T. This liaison will also involve communication with the relevant Support staff in the Secondary School.

Linking with Outside Agencies

Links will be made where necessary with other agencies involved in child development.

These include

Speech and Language Service

Occupational Therapy Services

Psychological Service

Physiotherapy Dept.

The school may make a referral to these agencies, and will make every effort to include their Recommendations in the child's IPLP/IEP.

Review. This policy will be reviewed as and when necessary.

Ratification

Signed 

Date 12/12/18

Chairperson Board of Management of Rathcormac National School