

## Monkstown Educate Together National School

### **Policy on Learning Support and Special Needs**

#### 1. Introduction.

- 1.1. It is fundamental to the ethos governing Monkstown Educate Together National School that it welcomes as pupils children of all ranges of ability. The school community acknowledges that some of its pupils will, for a variety of reasons, have educational needs that will require supplementary teaching. Some children start school with their need for supplementary teaching already identified; other children's needs emerge as their school life progresses.
- 1.2. This document aims to provide a clear statement of our school policy on dealing with children who require supplementary teaching. It is based on our belief that *every child in the school has a right to an education, and we, as a school, have an obligation to deliver that education.*
- 1.3. This policy is the result of a process initiated by the school staff on the academic year 2000/2001. The teaching staff, the special needs assistants, a psychologist from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), and our school inspector have all played a role in the development of this policy, as has the Board of Management of the school. The input of the staff and outside experts was invaluable and is gratefully acknowledged.

#### 2. Responsibilities

- 2.1. Several constituents of the school community are involved in ensuring that pupils with particular educational needs are encouraged to achieve their maximum potential during their time at MET NS. These include:
  - the Board of Management
  - the Principal
  - the teaching staff
  - other support staff

- parents
- pupils with special needs, and
- all other pupils in the school.

In addition, the school expects to be supported by a number of outside agencies and personnel, including,

- The school inspector
- The NEPS psychologist
- The Department of Education and Science and
- Specialist agencies (e.g., child guidance clinics) in the case of individual children.

2.2. This policy identifies the roles and obligations of the various elements of the school community, and sets out the process by which children with special needs are identified, their needs assessed and met and their progress monitored. It is intended to be of benefit to the whole school, but most especially the staff, the parents of children with special needs and, not least, the children themselves.

### 3. Enrolment.

3.1. The school's enrolment policy and procedures declare that children are offered places in the school on a first come first served basis. No other criteria are used in the selection of children for the school. On being offered a place in the school for their child, parents/guardians are asked to inform the school if a potential pupil has special needs. If this is the case, parents/guardians will be requested to meet with the Principal and provide any necessary material in order to ensure that the school can put in place all necessary supports for the child. If, in the view of the Principal, the needs of the child cannot be met without extra support, the child will not be enrolled in the school unless and until such supports are in place. If the Principal takes this view, she/he will so inform the Board. It is the responsibility of the school, in consultation with the parents/guardians and other appropriate agencies, to provide such supports. A place offered to a child with special needs will be held for him/her and will not be offered to anyone else.

3.2. In the case of children seeking to enter the school after junior infants, material provided will be expected to include reports from his/her current school. The offer of a place in the school to such a child will be contingent on the availability of places in the appropriate class, the provision of all relevant documentation, and the ability of our school in the view of the Board and the Principal, to provide that child with the education s/he needs and deserves.

#### 4. Intervention

4.1. The class teacher monitors the progress of all children on a continuous basis. If the teacher has concerns about the progress of a child, s/he will advise the parents/guardians on appropriate action that may involve assessment. The school then has the responsibility to act on the results of such assessment. Refer to 8.

4.2. The support of pupils in the school who have special needs is based on the following principles:

- Effective whole school policies and parental involvement
- Prevention of failure
- Provision of intensive early intervention, and
- Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need.

#### 5. Aims for Learning Support and Special Needs Education

5.1. The principal aim of all learning support is to optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable all pupils with special educational needs to achieve their maximum potential at school and where possible to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.

The school will aim:

- To enable these pupils to participate as much as possible in the full curriculum for their class level;
- To develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in pupils;
- Where possible, to enable these pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners;

- To provide supplementary teaching and additional support and resources for those pupils in English and/or mathematics;
- To provide behavioural and social skills programmes to help pupils improve their inter-personal skills;
- To involve parents in supporting their children's learning through effective parent-support programmes;
- To promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole-school policies on learning support for these pupils;
- To establish early intervention programmes and other programmes designed to enhance learning and to prevent/reduce difficulties in learning.
- To promote the social integration of LS and SN pupils through inclusive practices.

## 6 Roles and Responsibilities in Learning Support and Special Needs Provision

### 6.1 The Board of Management should:

- Oversee the development, implementation and review of school policy on learning support (LS) and special needs (SN);
- Ensure that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided;
- Provide a secure facility for storage of records relating to pupils in receipt of special needs and learning-support services.
- Where possible, facilitate appropriate in-service education for all relevant personnel;
- Support the principal and staff in the development of policies
- Where appropriate, maintain contact with the Department of Education and Science.

### 6.2 The Principal Teacher should:

- Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policy on LS and SN. The principal may co-ordinate these services him/her self or nominate a teacher on the staff to do so;
- Work with teachers and parents in developing the school plan;
- Monitor the implementation of the school plan;
- Monitor the selection of pupils for LS and SN;
- Oversee the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme;

- Keep teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available;
- Help teachers increase their knowledge and skills in the areas of LS and SN teaching;
- Consult with class teachers on (1) the prevention of learning difficulties (2) the screening and identification of pupils who may need supplementary teaching (3) participation in the development of Individual Profile and Learning Programmes (IPLP) (4) provision of appropriate long-term support for pupils who are no longer with LS teacher (5) identification of pupils with a general or specific learning disability
- Ensure that the class teachers are facilitated to enable them to be centrally involved in planning and directing intervention programmes;
- Develop an awareness among class teachers of the characteristics and effects of general and specific learning disabilities, the support services available and the class room arrangements that need to be made
- Facilitate communication between class teachers and parents of pupils in LS/SN;
- support the professional development of class teachers in this area by encouraging attendance at courses and sharing knowledge;
- establish school policies and procedures which enable parents to become involved effectively in the provision of learning support
- liaise with other principals where the LS/SN teacher is shared. The Principal of the base school should convene an annual meeting of: principals in the cluster, inspector(s), NEPS psychologist and LS/SN teachers to review and revise cluster-wide policies.

#### 6.3 The Special Duties Teacher should:

- disseminate information to staff in the area of Health & Safety issues in relation to the Special Needs school policy
- support the principal where necessary in the area of LS/SN.

#### 6.4 The Learning Support/Special Needs Teacher should:

- assist in the implementation of a broad range of whole-school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to prevent learning difficulties;
- develop an IPLP for each pupil selected for supplementary/resource teaching, in consultation with the class teacher and parents;
- maintain a weekly planning and progress record for each pupil or group of pupils ;

- deliver intensive early intervention programmes in English and/or maths to pupils in the junior section of the school (senior infants to second class);
- provide supplementary teaching in English and/or maths to pupils in the senior section of the school who experience low achievement and/or learning difficulties;
- provide behavioural and social skills programmes designed to help pupils improve their interpersonal skills;
- co-ordinate the implementation of whole-school procedures for the selection of pupils in accordance with the selection criteria specified in the school plan;
- contribute to the development of the whole-school plan on learning support;
- provide advice to class teachers in such areas as individual pupil assessment and programme planning as well as approaches to social skills, language development, reading, writing and mathematics for pupils experiencing learning or behavioural difficulties;
- purchase learning resources, books and materials to assist their pupils in their mainstream classrooms, in the school library as well as in the learning support room;
- meet with the principal teacher and the teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating special needs and learning support services at least once every school term to discuss issues relating to the implementation and development of the school plan;
- consult with school staff as a group at least once a year( and individual teachers more regularly) on issues such as:  
implementing programmes to prevent learning difficulties, selecting pupils, interpreting the results of diagnostic tests, planning classroom activities based on agreed learning targets in the IPLP, monitor the progress of pupils against agreed targets, supporting pupils who are experiencing learning difficulties but for whom no provision can be provided/continued;
- inform, consult, advise and support parents before, during and after every stage of any term of supplementary teaching;
- co-ordinate the administration by class teachers of a whole-school screening programme, and, following consultation with teachers, carry out a comprehensive diagnostic assessment of each pupil who has been identified as experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties;

- attend meetings (convened at least once a year by the principal of the base school and attended by the principals in the cluster) to address issues relating to provision of learning-support in the cluster of schools.

#### 6.5. The Special Needs Assistant should:

- carry out duties according to Appendix B, Special Needs Assistants, Department Of Education and Science
- provide general assistance to the class teacher: individual class teachers with the SNA will draw up specific duties for his/her individual class.
- attend where possible training courses/workshops provided by the Board of Management.
- be familiar with the school Code of Behaviour.
- be familiar with Health & Safety issues.

#### 6.6 The Parents should:

- support the work of the school (see 3.6.1 in the Guidelines);
- keep the class teacher informed of the problems and/or progress they observe in their child's learning;
- attend meetings with the LS/SN teacher to discuss: assessment, type of support offered by the school, the IPLP and the ways in which they can support the targets set in the IPLP.
- attend meetings at the end of each instructional period to review progress and plan for the future;
- participate in activities organised by the school that are designed to increase parental involvement in their children's learning;
- become familiar with and contribute to the development of the school plan on LS and SN

#### 6.7 Pupils Receiving Supplementary Education should:

- where practical, be given an opportunity make an input into their learning targets;
- be allowed to contribute to the selection of texts and other learning material that are relevant to attaining their targets;
- learn to apply the skills they learn in learning support to improve their own learning;
- be involved in the assessment process, where possible.

### 6.9 The National Educational Psychological Service:

The psychologist would not normally intervene until the following steps have been taken:

- the screening stage has taken place
- diagnostic testing has been done
- instructional term 13-20 weeks has taken place.

## 7 Whole-School Strategies for Preventing Learning Difficulties

The school will aim to

- adopt and promote agreed approaches to language development and other aspects of English and maths in order to insure progression and continuity from class to class;
- provide additional support in language development and in relevant early literacy and maths skills to pupils who need it;
- implement a whole-school parent involvement programme that focuses on developing children's oral language skills, sharing books with children, and developing their early maths skills;
- implement paired reading programmes involving adults in the community and pupils in the school;
- facilitate structured observation and assessment of the language, literacy and numeracy skills in the infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties.

## 8 Whole-School Procedures and Criteria for Identifying and Selecting Pupils for Supplementary Teaching

The following procedure is in place for identifying pupils in need of supplementary teaching

- Administration, scoring and interpretation of an appropriate screening measure by the class teacher or learning support teacher
- Selection of pupils for diagnostic assessment by the LS teacher, in consultation with the class teacher;
- Administration of diagnostic tests by LS teacher (with parental approval) to identify strengths and weaknesses;
- Determination of the nature of the intervention (additional support from class teacher and/or supplementary teaching from LS teacher. Priority

will be given to pupils who score at or below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile on nationally standardised tests of achievement in English and maths;

- Development of Individual Education Programme following consultation with all parties concerned;
- In relation to pupils with SN, the principal following consideration of reports on assessments carried out by relevant professionals establishes eligibility and degree of need. She/He applies to the Department of Education and Science to sanction the provision of the necessary resources. The results of the application are sent to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

#### 9 Whole-School Strategies for Implementing Early intervention Programmes (Senior Infants - Second Class)

Our intervention programmes aim to improve pupils' achievements and include the following characteristics:

- programmes are set within specific time-frames, each instructional period being 13-20 weeks;
- there is a shared expectation of success;
- programmes involve small- group or one-to-one teaching;
- programmes are intensive in terms of frequency of lessons (daily where possible) and the pace of instruction;
- programmes include a strong focus on the development of oral language;
- programmes emphasise the development of phoneme awareness and a range of other word identification skills;
- programmes engage pupils in frequent supervised oral and silent reading and monitor comprehension of these texts;
- programmes stress the interconnected nature of listening, speaking, reading and writing;
- in maths, programmes focus on language development and the development of mathematical procedures and concepts.

#### 10 Whole-School Procedures for Continuing/Discontinuing Learning Support

- the progress of each pupil should be evaluated at the end of each instructional period and, following consultation with all parties, a decision should be taken about type and frequency of support in the future.

## 11 Whole-School Strategies for Communicating Information

Regular communication between the LS/SN teachers, class teachers and parents enhances the value of the intervention. Therefore

- parents should be consulted (1) prior to diagnostic testing,(2) when the Individual Education Programme (IEP) is being developed and (3) when the instructional period is complete;
- the class teacher and the LS/SN teachers should meet (1) prior to diagnostic testing(2) when the IEP is being developed and (3) when the instructional period is complete;

## 12 Whole-School Procedures for Referring Pupils to Out-of-School Agencies

- The principal and/or the teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating LS/SN should oversee initial contacts with parents when referring pupils for psychological or other assessments, liaise with assessment services and, where appropriate, make arrangements for additional educational provision for children with diagnosed special needs;
- If a pupil is receiving help from a SN teacher he/she would not normally be provided with supplementary teaching by the LS teacher;
- However, a pupil may receive help from both the LS and SN teacher (eg help with English from the LS teacher and help with behavioural difficulties from the SN teacher) The teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating LS/SN should oversee the total intervention programme.

## 13 Whole-School Procedures for Record Keeping in Relation to LS/SN

- Records for each pupil should be maintained including, in particular, the following: an IEP, weekly planning and progress records. Other records that provide evidence of pupils moving towards agreed targets should be retained. All records should be stored in a secure location in the school and only those to whom permission has been given should read all confidential documents. Copies of reports should be made only with parental permission;
- The school authorities in an appropriate form should store records until the pupil is 18 years old. School authorities will, in so far as possible, keep abreast of the Data Protection Legislation for the retention of such records.

#### 14 Whole-School Approaches to Time-Tabling

- pupils should not miss out on the same curricular area each time they are withdrawn for supplementary teaching;
- pupils should not be withdrawn during the only opportunity for a particular subject during that week eg PE, Art, Music, SPHE etc.;
- models other than withdrawal should be considered eg classroom-based intervention should be seen as an alternative;
- if, because of special circumstances, a pupil is unavailable for their LS/SN session (e.g. guest speaker, party) the class teacher may reschedule the session with the co-operation of another teacher. Prior notice should be given to the LS/SN teacher. The class teacher should be informed in advance of any changes in the LS/SN timetable.
- in order to provide the intensive daily intervention recommended for younger pupils, consideration should be given to rotating the provision of supplementary teaching between schools in a cluster.

#### 15 Whole-School Policy on the Work Schedule of the LS/SN Teacher

- In addition to providing supplementary teaching, the LS/SN teachers must allocate time to non-teaching activities such as: overseeing early intervention and prevention programmes, conducting diagnostic assessments, maintaining and re-viewing pupil records, co-ordinating special needs services and consulting with teachers and parents. The DES recommends 30 minutes per day.
- The LS/SN teachers should not be expected to cover for absent colleagues;
- The LS/SN teachers should not be expected to do playtime supervision except in the base school;
- LS teacher should not be expected to have a caseload greater than 30 pupils at any given time.

#### 16 Whole School Approaches to Monitoring the Implementation of the School Plan on LS/SN

- Monitoring can be accomplished through once-a-term meetings between the principal teacher, the teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating

SN/LS and the LS and SN teachers. The meetings should address all aspects of the school plan. (See 2.2.17 in the Guidelines)

### 17 Whole-School Strategies for Reviewing the Policy on LS/SN

A comprehensive review of the school policy should be instigated by the school principal every two to three years and should take into account the views of the Board of Management, the principal teacher, the LS/SN teachers, other teachers on the school staff and the parents of pupils in the school.

### 18 Health and Safety Issues

Every staff member and pupil is entitled to a safe, secure, environment, and to be treated with due respect. When a place is offered to a child with special needs, all the supports to which that child is entitled should be in place prior to admission.

#### 18.1 Code of Behaviour

All pupils in the school are expected to treat their peers with courtesy and respect. The code of behaviour in the school should promote a learning environment, which is free from unacceptable disruption from an individual or group of individuals. Because a child with SN may not feel bound by the school code of discipline, the following guidelines should be followed in the event of repeated disruptive/dangerous behaviour:

- While our policy is to promote full attendance for all children, each SN child has a different need and as a result we have to adapt our policy to meet these needs. In the case of children whose needs necessitate a team to support their attendance, the school may not be able to facilitate their attendance if a member of the team is absent and substitute cover is unavailable (refer to individual files).
- For specific children an SNA should accompany the pupil at all times (refer to files)
- A behavioural modification programme should be agreed with all parties and with advice from the NEPS psychologist. This programme should be carefully monitored and reviewed as necessary
- The class teacher and SN teacher should be adequately supported by school management

- Records of behavioural patterns should be maintained
- The educational needs of the other children in the class should be considered equally important.
- The school will endeavour to ensure that all pupils will be aware of the need to value and respect difference

### 18.2 Supervision

- Where pupils receive LS on a one-to-one basis, the door of the room should remain open, or closed only if it has a glass panel.
- Where pupils are withdrawn for supplementary teaching/resource teaching, the LS/SN teacher or Special Needs assistant should supervise them on their way to and from their classrooms.

### 18.3 Special Supervision

- Where SN pupils have particular physical or sensory problems and use of toilet necessitates adult support the following guidelines should be adhered to:
  - SNA should be fully briefed on the child's condition by parent/guardian;
  - Procedures for toileting should be fully explained to SNA by parent/guardian;
  - Child should be fully prepared and informed by parent/guardian of the role of the SNA in toilet arrangements;
  - SNA should have other adult present in toilet area while procedure is taking place
  - Parent/guardian should provide the following; disposable gloves, wet wipes, nappies, nappy sacks, one or two spare sets of clothes.
  - School management should provide the following: disposable aprons, cleaning materials for changing room, disposable gloves for classroom;
  - All used nappies **must** be put in bag and tied off before being placed in bin;
  - Soiled clothes should be rinsed in warm water and put in plastic bag to be sent home on the day.
  - **Only** parents should dispose of needles, syringes and medical containers.

### REFERENCES

Learning Support Guidelines by the Department of Education and Science  
National Reading Initiative, 2000.

