



**MOUNT MERCY COLLEGE**

**Additional Educational Needs**

**Policy**

# Contents

<b>Contents</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<b>4</b>
Scope of policy	4
Aims of the policy	4
Legislative context	5
Relevant legislation	5
The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)	6
The Education Act (1998)	6
The Equal Status Act (2000) and the Equality Act (2004)	6
The Education (Welfare) Act (2000)	7
The Children’s Act, (2001)	7
The Teaching Council Act, (2001)	7
The Equality Act, (2004)	7
The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)	7
Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018	8
<b>Policy content</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Links to School Policies</b>	<b>9</b>
Mission Statement of Mount Mercy College	9
Links to Mission Statement	9
Links to Ethos	9
Link to Admissions Policy	10
Link to Anti-Bullying Policy (as incorporated into the Code of Behaviour at Mount Mercy College)	10
Link to attendance and punctuality policy	10
Links to Code of Discipline and Pastoral Care	10
<b>Roles and Responsibilities</b>	<b>11</b>
	1

Board of Management	11
Principal	11
Student Support Team	12
Subject Teacher	14
AEN Core Team	15
Special Education Teacher (SET) Teacher	16
Additional Educational Needs Coordinator	17
<b>Allocation of Supports</b>	<b>19</b>
1. How can we identify needs?	19
2. How can we meet needs?	20
3. How can we monitor and record outcomes for students?	20
<b>Continuum of Support Model</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Provision in our School</b>	<b>22</b>
Support for All	22
Support for Some	23
Support for Few	24
Engagement with outside agencies	24
Referral for psychological-educational assessment, involvement of National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS).	24
SNA Support	25
Student Engagement	25
Supporting the transition of students from primary school to Mount Mercy College	25
Student Voice	26
Learning Environment	27
Physical Environment	27
Social and Emotional	27
Parental/Guardian Engagement	27
<b>Review and Evaluation</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>29</b>



# Introduction

Mount Mercy College is a voluntary all-girls secondary school under the trusteeship of CEIST – Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust. Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, the Sisters of Mercy education is committed to holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised.

## Rationale

This policy meets the The Department of Education requirement to have a written policy for supporting students with Additional Educational Needs (AENs) in our school. The rationale for this policy is informed by the guiding principles set out by The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), in their Framework document, *Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Secondary Schools*. The rationale fosters the school's aim of providing an inclusive school environment that accommodates and celebrates differences between individuals. In addition, The Trustees, CEIST, have a statutory obligation to ensure that the policy in place reflects the principles and values of the religious and educational philosophy of the school. This policy is informed by the principle of duty of care – school "in loco parentis" '.

## Scope of policy

This policy applies to all students who have identified additional educational needs. It also applies to the whole school community, parents and outside-school agencies, in their relationship to students with additional educational needs in our school.

## Aims of the policy

- Support students with identified Additional Educational Needs (AENS) in an inclusive environment that facilitates the participation of all students.

- Outline the process through which the school can appropriately identify students' additional needs, implement interventions to appropriately meet those needs, and outline how AEN provision is allocated.
- Outline a staged approach to AEN provision, as outlined in the Department of Education Framework, the Continuum of Support Guidelines.
- To provide links to other policies in the school.
- To outline the roles and responsibilities within the school community in relation to the provision of support for students with additional educational needs.

## Legislative context

*'There is now a substantial body of legislation relating to the education of students with special educational needs. The legislation provides a statutory basis for education policy and provision by the Department of Education and Skills and its agencies in relation to the education of all children, including those with special educational needs. The legislation also provides the statutory framework for the development of effective structures at the national and the local level, to ensure equality of rights and equality of provision for students with special educational needs'. (From Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs, Post-Primary Guidelines).*

## Relevant legislation

- The Data Protection Acts, (1988, 1998 and 2003)
- The Education Act, (1998)(Rights to Education enriched in law)
  - [www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/51/enacted/en/html?q=Education+act](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/51/enacted/en/html?q=Education+act)
- The Equal Status Act, (2000) and the Equality Act (2004)(Non-Employment sphere)
- The Education Welfare Act, (2000) (School Attendance)
- The Children's Act, (2001)
- The Teaching Council Act, (2001)
- The Equality Act, (2004)
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN)(2004)

- [www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/act/30/enacted/en/html](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/act/30/enacted/en/html)
- Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018  
[www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/14/enacted/en/html](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/14/enacted/en/html)

### **The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)**

The Data Protection Acts allow 'data subjects' (those whose personal data is retained in a file), to establish the existence of personal data relating to them, to have access to and be given copies of the data – with limited exceptions- and to have inaccurate data rectified or erased. The Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003 brought manual records into the scope of the legislation and strengthened the rights of data subjects. In relation to the management of information on individual students, Mount Mercy College should act in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Acts.

### **The Education Act (1998)**

The act stipulates that the school plan shall state the objectives of the school relating to equality of access to and participation in the school, and the measures which the school proposes to take to achieve those objectives. This should include reference to equality of access and participation in the school for students with identified additional educational needs. (section 21, sub-section 2)

### **The Equal Status Act (2000) and the Equality Act (2004)**

The Equal Status Act (2000) promotes equality of opportunity and prohibits discrimination on nine specific grounds, including disability. Discrimination on the grounds of disability includes: a refusal or failure by the provider to do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability. by providing special treatment or facilities, if without such special treatment or facilities it would be impossible or unduly difficult for the person to avail himself or herself of the service (section 4, sub-section 1).

Both acts oblige a school to make every effort to meet the needs of a student with additional needs, and to enable the student to access and to participate in school life.

## **The Education (Welfare) Act (2000)**

This act does not make specific reference to special education or additional educational needs. However, the provisions of the act have relevance to the best interests of students and the whole school community.

## **The Children's Act, (2001)**

Relates mostly to the protection of children, the legal rights of children, and to children who have been involved in juvenile offences. The act defines a child as a person under the age of 18. Its relevance to school policy relates to the important protection to students having needs for particular care or protection. It represents a protective measure to ensure that students who have additional educational needs receive all the services they require.

## **The Teaching Council Act, (2001)**

The Act regulates the teaching profession and oversees the professional conduct of teachers:- [www.teachingcouncil.ie](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie). Under the terms of this Act, failing to comply with, or contravening any aspect of this Act, the Education Act (1998), the Education Welfare Act (2000) or the EPSEN Act (2004) are grounds for a complaint. Parents may have a right to appeal in such cases, on the grounds of professional malpractice. The Board Of Management is the respondent in law - not an individual teacher.

## **The Equality Act, (2004)**

Although not directly related to children, the Act further outlines the rights of students with additional needs and/or disabilities in Ireland.

## **The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)**

The three basic tenets of the EPSEN Act, 2004 are inclusive, consultation and accountability.

*'The statutory framework for the education of children with special educational needs is set out in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004). The EPSEN Act's purpose includes the aim that children with special educational needs should have the same rights to appropriate education as children without special educational needs. The act also provides a statutory basis for the National Council for Special Education'. (From Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs, Post-Primary Guidelines)*



The main provisions of the EPSEN Act in relation to schools are

- Duties of the Board of Management
- Enrolment of children with additional educational needs
- Content of Student Support files (Formerly referred to as Individual Education Plans)
- Implementation of Student Support Files
- Role of the Principal in relation to Student Support Files and assessment
- Rights of parents
- Rights of students
- Role of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

### **Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018**

Outlines the legal obligation that a school shall prepare and publish an admission policy and that such policy will include a statement that the school shall not discriminate in its admission of a student to the school on specified grounds, and to provide that in certain circumstances the patron or Minister may issue a direction to a board of management in relation to the admission of students to the school and to provide that in certain circumstances the patron may appoint an independent person to comply with such direction, and to provide that in certain circumstances the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) or the Child and Family Agency may designate a school or centre for education which a student is to attend, and, following a report from the National Council for Special Education, in certain circumstances the Minister may issue a direction in respect of the additional provision of education for children with special educational needs;

## **Policy content**

- Links to other key policies in the school
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Managing the transition of students with special educational needs from primary school to Mount Mercy College

- Support structures for facilitating the involvement of parents and communication with parents
- Links within the school
- Links with external support agencies and services
- Procedure for identifying students who may have special educational needs, and their referral for psycho-educational assessment
- Provision of a staged approach to supporting students with additional needs
- Arrangements for making accommodations in the physical environment of the school
- Student Support Files
- Review and evaluation
- Conclusion

## **Links to School Policies**

### **Mission Statement of Mount Mercy College**

At Mount Mercy College, we strive to promote self-worth and self-confidence in a Christian environment. We aim to enable students to develop to their full potential, with emphasis on the academic, cultural, social, spiritual, aesthetic and technological areas. The school community aims to foster a sense of caring and justice.

### **Links to Mission Statement**

The school strives to enable students who have a special educational needs, to develop their full potential in all areas, within the full scope of the school's mission statement. The school aims to foster an optimum sense of self-worth and self –confidence in each student who has an additional educational need.

### **Links to Ethos**

From the inspiration of the Sisters of Mercy, who founded the school, we have inherited our commitment to value diversity, to respect ourselves and each other and to be responsible for ourselves and to society.

## **Link to Admissions Policy**

In Mount Mercy College, we are striving to be a welcoming place, inclusive in our intake and comprehensive in our curriculum. The Gospel and the legacy of Catherine McAuley challenges our school to be inclusive and to be especially mindful of the disadvantaged and mindful of those with additional needs.

The school reserves the right to refuse enrolment to any student in exceptional cases. Such an exceptional case could include the following:

1. In the opinion of the Board of Management, the student poses an unacceptable risk to other students, to school staff or to school property

or

2. The student has special needs such that, even with additional resources available from the Department of Education and Skills, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the student with an appropriate education.

## **Link to Anti-Bullying Policy (as incorporated into the Code of Behaviour at Mount Mercy College)**

"We aspire to...foster an atmosphere of respect, understanding and encouragement between all who teach, work and learn in the school, so that the development and contribution of every individual can be acknowledged ..."

## **Link to attendance and punctuality policy**

It is the policy of Mount Mercy College to encourage full attendance and punctuality.

## **Links to Code of Discipline and Pastoral Care**

A core value of the community at Mount Mercy College is a commitment that each student is provided with a learning environment where the student is treated with respect and dignity and where effective teaching and learning can take place. The school aims to provide each student who has an additional need with a learning environment in which she is

treated with respect and dignity and in which the teaching and learning environment is effective.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Board of Management**

- o The Board of Management, in cooperation with the school staff and in accordance with school policies and procedures, aims to co-operate to the greatest extent practicable with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and the special educational needs organiser (SENO) assigned to Mount Mercy College, in relation to the inclusive education of students with special educational needs.
- o The Board of Management is committed to ensuring that the rights of parents as prescribed in legislation, including the EPSEN Act (2004) and as informed by good practice, are upheld in the school.

### **Principal**

- o The principal accepts overall responsibility for ensuring that provision and allocation of support for students with additional educational needs.
- o The Principal has the general responsibility for establishing and promoting whole-school policies and procedures that are supportive of all students, including those with additional educational needs.
- o The principal ensures that procedures exist for consultation with 'feeder' primary and special schools with regard to the enrolment of new students with additional educational needs.
- o The principal promotes the involvement of the parents of students with additional educational needs.
- o The principal oversees the adoption and implementation of suitable whole-school policies and practices in relation to the education of students with additional educational needs, and continuously monitors the implementation of these policies.

- o The principal ensures that mainstream teachers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the education of students with additional educational needs.
- o The principal facilitates the creation within mainstream classes of an inclusive environment for students with additional educational needs, by ensuring that mainstream teachers are provided with appropriate information about the students in their classes who have additional educational needs.
- o The principal facilitates, where possible, the continuous professional development of all members of staff in relation to the education of students with additional educational needs.
- o Where appropriate, the principal arranges for the transfer of students with additional educational needs, to another suitable setting for education or training (or both), when their placement in Mount Mercy College is completed.
- o In order to support the effective provision of education to students with additional educational needs, the principal has convened a Student Support Team (SST) and has, subject to her overall statutory responsibilities, delegated the performance of specific responsibilities to members of the support team, and has appointed a coordinator of the team.

## **Student Support Team**

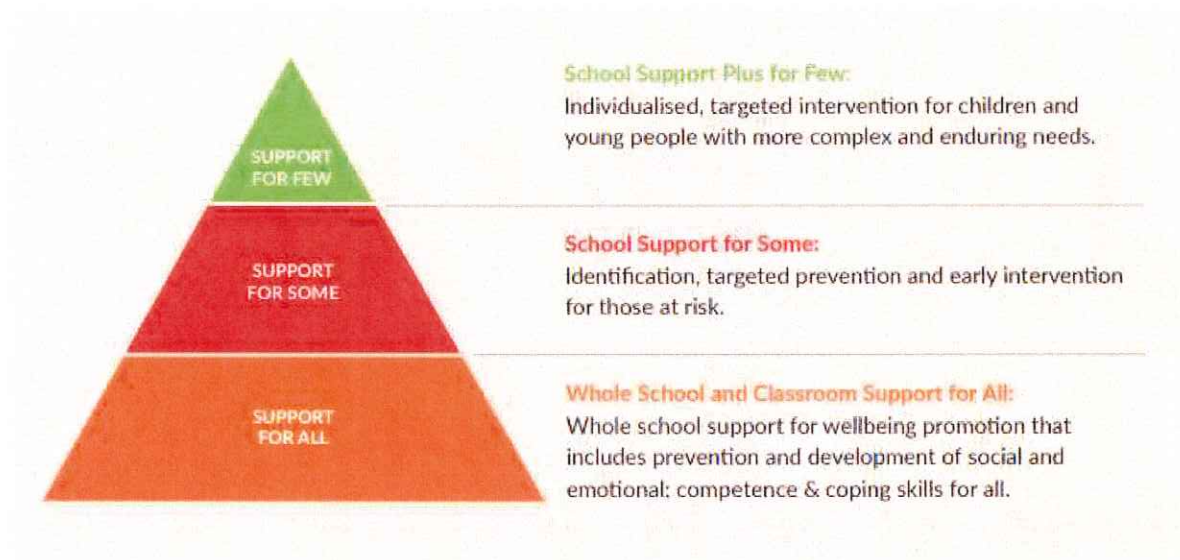
The student support team is a central part of the student support system in the school. It is a team through which many of the existing student supports are coordinated and planned. A student support team acts as a core team, bringing coherence to the support system by coordinating the work of key support departments, teams and/or groups in our school: the Additional Education Needs (AEN) department, the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) along with Care Team, Senior Management and guidance and pastoral staff. The School Leadership's teams have a role in guiding and supporting the school's student support team.

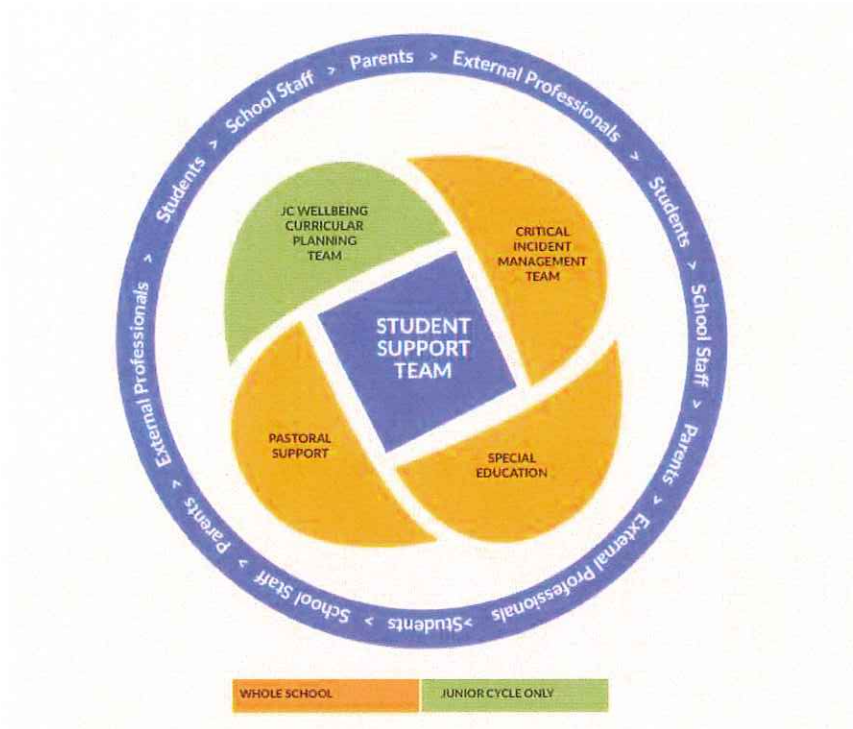
The team engages in the following key aims:

- coordinate the support available for students in the school;

- enable students with support needs to continue to access a full education;
- assist staff to manage those students effectively;
- facilitate links to the community and other nonschool support services e.g NEPS/CAMHS/HSE/Professional Services/NCSE/SENO
- ensure new staff members are briefed about policies and procedures relating to student wellbeing and support;
- advise school leaders on the development and review of effective student support policies and structures.

### The Student Support Team Model





## Subject Teacher

- Subject Teachers are the first-line responsibility for the education of all the students in their classes , including students with additional needs (NCSE), in line with the staged approach of the continuum of support model: *Support for All, Support for Some, Support for Few*
- Subject Teachers plan lessons carefully to address the diverse needs within their classroom
- Cater for a variety of learning needs throughout the school
- Adapt teaching approaches & differentiate lessons to meet the needs of all students
- Adapt the environment to promote curricular access and participation for some students
- Collaborate with Special Education Teachers (SET) and parents in the planning process and the creation and implementation of student support files (SFFs)
- Employ a variety appropriate teaching approaches and methodologies, including active learning, small-group tuition, individual teaching and scaffolded instructions

- Facilitate the use of technology for learning e.g laptops/Ipad, Google Classroom, AT accessibility tools
- Where appropriate, mainstream teachers use technological aids such as sound field systems for hearing-impaired students.
- Put in place Reasonable Accommodations e.g. Spelling and Grammar waiver, use of a word processor
- Teachers have access to information regarding students through the Student Support File Process (SSF). Teachers have a responsibility to read a student's Student Support file, which is stored securely on the school's VsWare system.
- Teachers have access to a SEN Google Shared Drive with a range of resources to assist with planning and implementing supports for students within their classes
- Mainstream teachers facilitate the use by students of laptops in the classroom where appropriate.
- Facilitate the implementation of team teaching. This support is recognised as fostering an interacting and engaging learning environment, greater individual attention, more support, better self-esteem for students, social opportunities and creates an inclusive environment (NCSE)

## **AEN Core Team**

The core Additional educational needs team comprises the Principal, the coordinator of special educational needs, the learning-support teachers (SET). Meetings of the core team are held weekly and other teachers or special needs assistants are invited to attend as appropriate.

- The additional needs support team attends a weekly meeting with the AEN coordinator.
- AEN coordinator maintains continuous contact with the principal vis-à-vis issues that are discussed at the AEN meeting.



- AEN coordinator updates the Principal on an ongoing basis via Google Workspace and when necessary in person weekly meetings
- Members of the additional needs support team liaise daily with school management, with teaching staff and with special needs assistants, as the need arises.
- The core AEN meet meet at the beginning of the year whole school planning
- The staff bulletin is used to keep staff informed, when necessary, of issues pertaining to AEN educational needs, and through email and Google Workspace
- The AEN co-ordinator attends and contributes at pre-parent-teacher meetings for all year groups and when need at school information nights
- The core AEN team participate in administrative duties relating to the work of the AEN team

## **Special Education Teacher (SET) Teacher**

- Contribute to the planning and implementation of student support files
- Create short-term planning documents which reflect the support plans
- Consult with class teachers to plan interventions to meet the priority learning needs of students with additional needs
- As part of the SSF process, assisting with monitoring and reviewing outcomes need and progress of targets and plan further interventions
- Whole school Literacy screening
- Completion of applications for reasonable accommodations (RACE)
- Completion of testing in relation to DARE alloptions
- Completion of application for assistive technology
- Gathering samples of students work
- Supervision of special centres for school exams
- Organising accommodations for students during school exams
- SET teachers with the appropriate qualification can at times administer individualised standardised tests with students

- Participate when appropriate in continuing professional development specifically in the area of AEN

## **Additional Educational Needs Coordinator**

Assisted as appropriate by the principal, senior leadership team, the Student Support Team, AEN coordinator duties:

- Assume overall leadership and responsibility for co-ordinating the school's provision for the inclusion of students with additional educational needs.
- Act as an advocate within the school for students with additional educational needs
- Liaise with the principal and the additional educational needs core support team
- Member of the Student Support Team
- Liaise with parents of students who have additional educational needs.
- Liaise with primary school teachers of students who have additional educational needs.
- Draw up the learning support SET timetable, in line staged approach to SET provision.
- Liaise with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS ) educational psychologist assigned to the school and with speech and language therapists and other external professionals as appropriate.
- Work closely with mainstream subject teachers and disseminate information to subject teachers relevant to the students in their classes who have additional educational needs.
- Work closely with the special needs assistants in the school.
- Liaise with other support personnel as necessary, such as the Visiting Teacher for the Hearing-impaired.
- Lead role in organising applications for reasonable accommodations in certificate examinations for students with additional educational needs and facilitates in-school arrangements for providing the appropriate accommodations for these students in school and state examinations
- Design and implementation of a system for gathering necessary information in the support of reasonable accommodation applications (RACE)

- o Maintains all relevant documentation in relation to RACE and archives annual in the event of an audit
- o Lead role in liaising with the special educational needs organiser (SENO) assigned to the school and makes applications for resources to The National Council for Special Education (NCSE).
- o Take a lead role in facilitating the arrangement of psychological or other assessment, as appropriate, of students who have additional educational needs or students who have emerging needs.
- o Take a leading role in making arrangements for the planning, implementation and review of Student Support Files (Formerly known as - Individual Education Plans IEPs for students with additional educational needs.
- o Maintain a list of students with additional educational needs and updates it regularly
- o Coordinate whole school screening to facilitate identification of students with additional educational needs and those with emerging needs
- o Lead role in the establishment of Student Support files: a process to identify, implement and monitor supports for students with additional needs
- o Lead role in the procurement, management and maintenance of specialised learning and teaching resources, technology supports and equipment for students with special educational needs.
- o Lead role in keeping staff informed of professional development courses and seminars related to the education and inclusion of children with special educational needs.
- o Lead role in provides a repository of resources for staff, to assist their working with AEN, comprising books, journals and other teaching resources (Digital and Physical)
- o Complies with General Data Protection legislation in relation to the retention of files and confidential information regarding students with AEN.

# Allocation of Supports

In planning for supporting students with additional needs the school adheres to the guidelines of the Continuum of Support Framework (2017). The school identifies students' holistic needs, to include academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. The school recognises that needs occur along a continuum, can be transient or long-term and that students' level of support depends on their identified needs. Implementing interventions should therefore be incremental, moving from classroom based to more individualised support. This involves a three-step process, outlined below. At all times, the principle underlying the allocation of support is that students *with the greatest levels of needs should have access to the greatest level of support (NCSE)*.

## 1. How can we identify needs?

- 6th class report
- Whole school standardised tests
- Student Educational Passport
- My Thoughts About School Survey (NEPS)
- Primary School visits
- Parent/Guardian consultation
- Student consultation
- Reports from outside agencies: NEPS, CALMHs, Visiting Teacher Service
- Professional reports (Educations, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language, Multi-disciplinary, Medical, Consultants)
- Subject teacher observation
- Subject teacher formal and informal assessment
- Individualised testing

## 2. How can we meet needs?

- Whole completion of Continuum of support self- reflective questionnaire (SET allocation model toolkit)
- AEN provision plan completed using SET allocation model
- Collaborative communication systems are in place between staff, parents, outside agencies, and previous school.
- Compile student support file (SSF)
- Needs are communicated, utilising secure ICT, to teachers through SSF System in with parental/guardian consent
- SSF are in place for students with identified needs, completed in a collaborative process with relevant staff, parents and the student
- Where appropriate identify - SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timed ) targets on SSFs
- Targeted interventions for Level 2, *support for some* for students, based on SSFs
- Assistive technology support - in accordance with DES criteria - or where recommended by a professional report, or where the students meets the eligibility criteria of the state examinations commission
- Other Reasonable accommodation supports, other than technology - in accordance with DES criteria - or where recommended in a professional report
- Targeted support in relation to subject choice and curriculum access
- NEPS referral - full assessment
- Group and/or individualised standardised attainment testing and ability testing

## 3. How can we monitor and record outcomes for students?

- Subject teacher observation and referrals - through Student Support Team Referral system (Google Form)
- Year Head Referral
- Subject teacher interventions -

- i. Classroom observations
- ii. assessment for learning approaches
- iii. Formal assessment, in school tests and exams
- Group testing of reading and spelling 2nd-year Term 2
- Individual testing by SEN department teachers
- Student Support Files

The special educational needs co-ordinator takes a lead role in making arrangements for the planning, implementation, and review of Individual Education Plans for students with special educational needs.

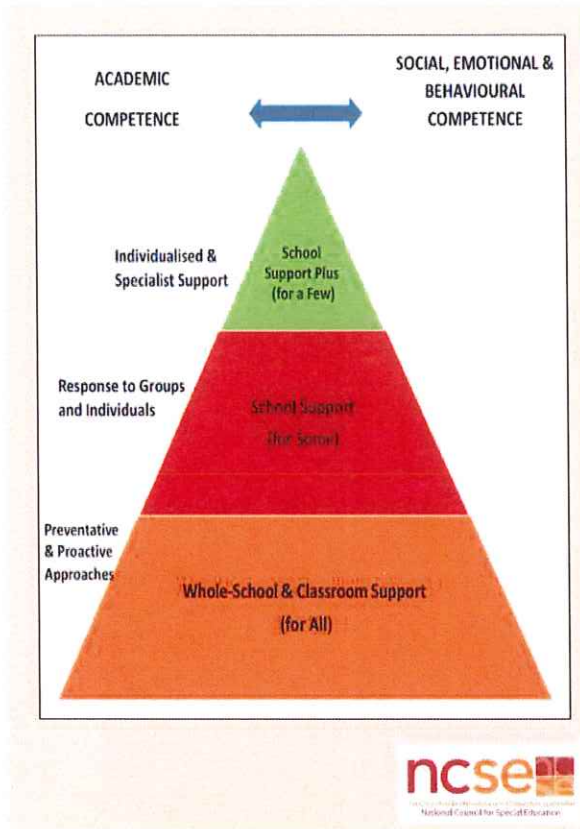
## Continuum of Support Model

The provision of additional support is based on needs and a staged approach to provision is taken. It works in line with the NCSE's three tier approach outlined below.

*'Students who have needs that emerge during their post-primary education, would typically have their needs met through the Continuum, by first receiving Support for ALL. The process of identifying needs, gathering information and planning and reviewing interventions, will help identify students with higher levels of need who will need additional support. In turn, the processes inherent in School Support (for some), will identify those needing School Support Plus (for few). Therefore students with emerging needs might typically work their way through the levels of support, as needed. Of course, many students will be able to have their needs met at School Support and will not need the level of support needed at School Support Plus, while others might need School Support for a period of time and then revert to Support for ALL. However, sometimes a student will be 'fast-tracked' because needs emerge quickly and require intensive levels of support.'*(Continuum of Support, NEPS, p. 10, 1.4.2)

# Provision in our School

## Support for All



○ Students at this level of support are, in the main, supported by their subject teachers in mainstream subject classes.

○ Subject Teachers are the first-line responsibility for the education of all the students in their classes, including students with additional needs (NCSE)

○ The role of the subject teacher in relation to supporting students with additional educational needs is outlined in a previous section.

○ Students at this level may be entitled to exemptions from the study of Irish.

○ Students at this level of support may

qualify for RACE accommodations (use of a laptop), and with the students' and parental/guardian consent, the school will make an application on their behalf to the State Examinations Commission, who will determine their eligibility.

- Students at this level may be entitled to the use of assistive technology. The school on their behalf will can apply to the SENO of check their eligibility for a grant for such technology (i.e laptop/hearing equipment)
- In the case of the use of assistive technology, specifically laptops, a decision in relation to the use of a word processor (laptop) for use in the State Examinations, lies with the State Examinations Commissions. The school, on behalf of the student, will support the application for any eligible students. Eligibility in this regard is determined solely by the State Examinations Commission. Guidelines are available on the Department of Education website.

- o Students at a *support for all level*, also have access to following whole school supports
  - o Subject Teacher Support
  - o Year Head Team
  - o Student Support Team
  - o Guidance Team
  - o Well-Being Coordinator
  - o Whole School Curriculums Programmes (Friends Youth, SPHE, Study Skills, 400 hours of Wellbeing subjects, Digital Literacy)
  - o Senior Management Team (Principal and Deputy Principals)
  - o AEN Team
  - o AEN Team Whole School Literacy & Numeracy Standardised Testing & Screening
  - o Student Support Team - Whole School Standardised Ability testing (CATs & DATs)
  - o Whole school programmes: Study Skills, Guidance timetables, Friends Youth, Wellbeing initiatives

## Support for Some

Where students continue to present with identified or emerging needs, despite whole-school interventions, ***Support for Some*** is initiated. At this level a student support file is completed for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.

- o Parent(s)' and students' permission is sought for provision of any provision at the support for some level
- o Students are supported in a variety of ways including team teaching, co-teaching, early intervention, small group & individual support
- o Students who have been formally assessed by a psychologist, psychiatrist, speech and language therapist (SLT), occupational therapist (OT) or other appropriate professional as having additional educational needs will have their reports reviewed and any recommendations will be considered. Any such recommendations will be implemented in line with the continuum of support model, based on identified needs.



- Students accessing additional teaching support (small group/individual) can avail of support during a time when subjects they are not studying are timetabled.
- The focus of instruction in the learning-support classes is on assessed areas of need in literacy and/or mathematics and/or on specific aspects of the curriculum as appropriate.
- At Senior level, students may, if necessary, be timetabled for support teaching during non-exam option subject time.
- Where appropriate, in-class student support is provided by special educational needs assistants.
- Students at this level may be entitled to exemptions from the study of Irish.
- Students at this level may be entitled to qualify for RACE accommodations.

## **Support for Few**

At this level, collaboration with outside agencies and professionals is required to engage in a more detailed and systematic approach to information gathering and assessment. It involves collaborations with teams across the school: guidance, year-head, senior management team and student support team.

### **Engagement with outside agencies**

#### **Referral for psychological-educational assessment, involvement of National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS).**

- Information is gathered from a variety of sources to help identify and support students with significant additional needs who have not previously been formally assessed and who may need to be referred to an educational psychologist. The sources of information include
  - Information from primary school teachers
  - Results of pre-entrance standardised assessments
  - Results of school house exams or of informal class tests in particular subject areas
  - Information gathered from subject teachers on foot of a referral made by one of those teachers
  - Information from parents

- Information from the student
- Results of in-school diagnostic assessments in literacy and/or mathematics
- If the information gathered from some or all of the above sources indicates clearly that the student is consistently not performing relative to ability in some core element of the curriculum, and this lack of performance cannot be otherwise explained, a referral will be made to the NEPS psychologist, with parental consent.

## **SNA Support**

Circular 30/2014 states:

*‘SNAs are recruited specifically to assist in the care needs of pupils with disabilities in an educational context. SNAs therefore do not have a teaching/pedagogical role and it would not be appropriate for pupils with special needs to be taught by unqualified personnel. Section 22 (1) of the Education Act 1998 states the primacy of the teacher in the education and personal development of students in schools. The classroom teacher is responsible for educating all pupils in his/her class, including any pupil with a special educational need. The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all pupils in his/her classroom, including pupils with special educational needs.’*

## **Student Engagement**

### **Supporting the transition of students from primary school to Mount Mercy College**

- Main primary ‘feeder’ schools are visited by the Principal and the AEN co-ordinator, for the purpose of gathering and transferring information. Schools not visited are contacted by telephone by the AEN co-ordinator if this is deemed necessary.
- Students whose performance on pre-enrollment standardized literacy testing is of concern are contacted by the AEN coordinator and/or senior management team.
- An information evening is held for parents of incoming students with the principal, deputy-principal, AEN co-ordinator and the guidance counsellor.

- o Parents are invited to forward copies of any professional assessment reports that have been completed for their daughters. (Educational Psychology, Occupational Therapy, Hearing, Vision, Speech and Language, Multi-Disciplinary Team, Medical)
- o An open evening is held for all incoming students to familiarise themselves with the school and AEN core team staff are available to meet with parents and students at that meeting.
- o The AEN co-ordinator arranges to meet parents who have forwarded assessment reports, or anyone who has requested a meeting.
- o Prior to the start of the school year, the AEN co-ordinator may meet with parent/guardian(s) accompanied by the student, where such a meeting is deemed necessary.
- o Before the school year starts, all teachers are made aware, at an AEN meeting, of the educational needs of the students in their classes and advice is given about any necessary special arrangements in the classroom. Information regarding students is made readily accessible, to relevant staff, with parental/guardian consent, on the school's confidential and secure VsWare system.
- o Achievement scores that are attained through the administration of standardised tests before entry form part of the careful identification and monitoring of students who may need extra support.
- o Students with attainment on or below the 10% percentile are prioritised for support, in line with NCSE guidelines (2017).
- o The AEN coordinator may complete a pre enrolment checklist with parents of students with identified AENs.
- o Subject and class teachers monitor progress closely and use the AEN department referral system to bring any concerns to the attention of the AEN or SST.
- o Students with AEN needs are placed in a mainstream mixed ability grouping in all first year classes.

### **Student Voice**

The AEN coordinator is available to meet with students with identified or emerging additional educational needs. The contribution of students and their self-advocacy is a very important part of planning to support them in school.

## **Learning Environment**

### **Physical Environment**

- o AEN coordinator may complete a learning environment checklist for students with AENs.
- o The school strives to provide a safe and comfortable environment for all students
- o Access to an elevator is available if necessary.
- o The needs of particular students with additional educational needs are taken into consideration in the allocation of lockers.
- o To facilitate laptop-use and optimal placement of a student who uses a laptop in the classroom.
- o Sound-field systems are installed in classrooms as needed.
- o The needs of neurodiverse students or students with sensory needs are considered and best efforts will be made to make adjustments or accommodations to support these needs.

### **Social and Emotional**

- The AEN coordinator may complete a *Screening for Behaviour form* with any student with and social/emotional/behaviour concerns.
- The AEN coordinator will complete a *My Thoughts About School* student survey with any student presenting with concerns or emerging needs in relation to emotional regulation or who need additional support in settling into secondary school.

## **Parental/Guardian Engagement**

- o Management and staff are always ready to work closely in partnership with parents.
- o Parents of incoming first years are invited to attend an information evening and an open evening.
- o School management, the guidance counsellor and the AEN co-ordinator maintain regular communication with parents.
- o The AEN coordinator communicates information from meetings with parents to school management, to the student support team, to the guidance team, and to the

year head team. Records of communication are kept in the *Log of Actions* in the student's *Student Support File*, in the AEN departments Google Drive.

- o The Student Support File process also ensures that records are kept of telephone conversations with parents and, if necessary and with parental consent, relevant information from meetings with parents and/or from telephone conversations is communicated to the student's subject teachers.
- o Students' provision on the continuum of support is communicated to them in writing or by telephone via parents and guardians.
- o Parents are contacted if monitoring of school in-house exams by the AEN team, Year Head, Student Support Team, identifies that a student is underperforming or has emerging additional needs.
- o Parents/Guardians are contacted by the AEN coordinator if a teacher has an on-going concern related to a student's performance.
- o Parental/Guardian consent may be sought for in-school assessment testing is undertaken on foot of a referral and parents are made aware of the results.
- o Parents/Guardians may be contacted if a student's performance on a standardised assessment is of concern.
- o Parental/Guardian consent is sought before bringing the student's needs to the attention of the NEPS psychologist, if such a referral is deemed necessary.
- o Parents/Guardians who have arranged for a private psycho-educational assessment report for their daughter, can contact the AEN co-ordinator, to arrange a meeting to discuss the finding of the assessment.
- o Parents/Guardians are contacted before applications for resources on behalf of their daughter are made to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) e.g SNA access/AT etc.
- o Parents/Guardians are contacted before applications for Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations (RACE) are made to the State Examinations Commission
- o Parents are contacted before in-house exams and made aware of the reasonable accommodations, if any, that are being provided for their daughters in these exams.

# Review and Evaluation

This policy is reviewed on an annual basis

## Conclusion

This Draft Special Educational Needs Policy document is prepared in accordance with the Department of Education and Skills Post-Primary Guidelines for Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs (2007)

Adopted by Board of Management on:

18-09-2023

  
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Tricia Ryan,

CHAIRMAN, B.O.M.

SECRETARY, B.O.M.