

# Special Needs Policy

## Ransboro National School

### Introductory Statement

This policy was formulated through initial meetings between principal and LS/RT teachers in the school followed by a staff meeting where all staff were present, on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan 09. A review of this policy was carried out by Principal and Learning Support Team on 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2012.

### Rationale

- To identify, assess and provide effectively for children in our school presenting with learning difficulties and special educational needs.
- To increase whole staff awareness of children with learning difficulties and Special Educational Needs.
- To clarify roles of staff working with children with learning difficulties and SEN.
- To provide the best possible education for children with difficulties and Special Educational Needs in our school and to ensure the full inclusion of all children into our school.

### Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

As with all our policies, this policy is directly related to the characteristic spirit of the school. The school recognises the variety of differences that exist between children and the need to accommodate these differences. While the aim of the school is to ensure the individuality of each child is accommodated, nevertheless the school also acknowledges the right of each child to an education in a relatively disruption-free environment.

### Aims

- The main aim of our Special Educational Needs policy is to optimize the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs to achieve adequate levels of literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school. While our aim is that all children would reach their full potential in the areas of literacy and numeracy, we will also focus on social skills and life skills in the case of children with special educational needs or identified low incidence disabilities.

We aim to:

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

- provide supplementary teaching and additional support for these pupils in English and Mathematics, and in the case of children assessed as having special educational needs, the extra support will encompass the wider curriculum;
- support parents in supporting their children's learning through effective support programmes;
- promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole school policy in the area of special educational needs and in the development of plans of work and in relevant cases, Individual Education Plans;
- establish early intervention programmes and other programmes designed to enhance learning and to prevent/reduce difficulties in learning.

## **Enrolment of children with Special Needs:**

Ransboro National School recognises the vital importance of having relevant information which may be pertinent to the development /educational progress of a child at the earliest possible opportunity. Our school gathers information on a child with special needs who wishes to enrol in the school from a variety of sources:

- the local feeder playschool is in regular contact with the principal;
- a meeting to be arranged annually between infant teacher and playschool teachers
- our updated enrolment form is clear and specific in the information it seeks;
- a meeting is held with prospective parents in February or March and parents are invited to discuss any concerns they may have or come forward with information privately;
- personnel in our school maintain excellent working relationship with other professional bodies e.g HSE, Psychological Services, Occupational Therapy Services, Public Health Nurse Service etc;
- Ongoing meetings between parents/ principal/ class teachers, in some cases before a child starts school;
- Requesting copies of reports, assessments etc that may provide helpful information to the school in advance of the enrolment of the child;

The final decision on the enrolment of a child in the school rests with the Board of Management, and the Board have a period of 21 days to communicate this decision to parents. The Board of Management have a clear enrolment policy in place, which they follow in all cases of making decisions on enrolment.

In the case of a child wishing to enrol in our school and presenting with difficulties or a particular disability, our school will make every effort to gather all the relevant information and have all applications to the NCSE for extra resources prepared in good time, to ensure that all possible support is in place for the child at the earliest possible time. Special consideration would have to be given to any health and safety issues that could arise in some cases, however our school has some facilities in place to ensure equal access for persons with a disability for example, a disabled toilet, ramps etc; We also have a policy in place on the administration of medication.

## **Inclusion:**

Ransboro National School strive towards achieving the practical application in our school of the following definition of the inclusive school:

“ Schools need to be more flexible and responsive in how they plan and deliver programmes for pupils if they are to succeed in meeting the needs of all their pupils successfully....Effective inclusion....involves developing learning and teaching approaches which are responsive to pupil’s personal learning styles and prior attainment and ensures that pupils are involved actively in taking responsibility for their learning” (HMIE, 2002, p.32, [www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie))

The following are the practical steps that are in place to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are integrated into the life of the school and the classroom:

- buddy systems are in place in classrooms where a child may be involved in helping another child to carry out particular tasks at particular times
- regular SPHE lessons
- circle time
- reading buddies,
- groups coming for support with SEN child etc;
- collaboration and liaison with other professionals

- effectively supporting pupils in accessing the curriculum

## **Procedure for identification /screening of children with learning difficulties/special educational needs from within the school(Staged approach to SEN, Stage 1)**

The following procedures are in place to help teachers identify/screen pupils who may have special educational needs or learning difficulties:

- administration of and analysis of results of the Drumcondra standardised tests from 1<sup>st</sup> class upwards in the areas of mathematics, english and spelling
- teacher observation
- use of checklists e.g Westwood P.22
- Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) in Senior Infants
- Ongoing consultation between class teachers, support teachers and principal regarding progress of children

In the event of difficulties presenting, systems are in place to ensure effective communication to parents and outside agencies.

At this stage and in relation to children we may be concerned about, the class teacher will also monitor and record any difficulties or behaviours being experienced by the pupil and strategies that were used to help the pupil. The teacher will monitor the situation on an ongoing basis and feedback to principal and LS/RT teachers. The interventions used by the class teacher will be reviewed after a specified time period, decided in advance by the involved parties. It will be decided at this stage whether or not it is necessary to progress to Stage 2.

## **General Guidelines for the Delivery of Supplementary Teaching (Staged approach to SEN, Stage 2):**

- The decision is taken whether or not to provide supplementary teaching for a child based on standardised test results as mentioned previously, and based on results of the MIST test in Senior Infants. As per the Learning Support Guidelines, we aim to offer support to children scoring at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile in literacy and mathematics. In other cases where there are concerns regarding a child highlighted by a class teacher, and that the class teacher in consultation with the LS/RT teacher feel that following initial intervention at stage 1 that the child is still having difficulties, a decision may be made to offer some supplementary teaching to the child for a period of time. An instructional term usually consists of a full term, however in some cases children may be taken for shorter periods of time.
- There are a variety of approaches in use in the delivery of support to children in our school. They include the following approaches: small group, one to one tuition, in-class support, team teaching etc; The lessons taught to children and programmes in use are guided by the needs of pupils.
- There is ongoing collaboration between class teacher and support teachers to ensure consistency and continuity for the pupil. Careful attention is paid to issue of

homework and the decision of who allocates homework to the child and what the homework is, is made jointly by the class teacher and the support teacher, bearing in mind that a double amount of homework is to be avoided in the case of children attending for support. In the case of spelling groups, the support teacher will assign spellings and the class teacher will reduce expectations with regard to the class spelling programme.

## **Early Intervention Programmes**

- Huge emphasis is put on the importance of early intervention in the school. The Infant teacher communicates any concerns and collaborates on a regular basis with the support teachers. The Aistear Programme is used in the Infant classes and a focus is put on developing literacy and numeracy through play. The following are some of the early intervention programmes currently in use in our school: Forward Together, Sounds Abound, Junior Infant Activity Time- Fine motor skills and hand-eye co-ordination, In-class support from LSRT Team, Station teaching and withdrawal of an infant child for extra resource support etc;

## **Timetabling and Communication**

- The LS/RT teachers organise their own timetable in consultation with the class teachers and the principal. Time is allowed for administration of testing, administrative duties and communication. The principal will supervise classes on the Thursday and Friday of the first week back at the beginning of each term to allow for formal communication between support teachers and class teachers.
- Communication with parents is ongoing and consistent. Parents are invited bi-annually to discuss IEP's and pupil progress.
- We have good rapport and ongoing communication with other professionals, and staff are encouraged to attend meetings with relevant professionals e.g psychologists, occupational therapists, visiting teachers etc;

## **Procedure for referral of Special Needs children from within the school (Staged approach to SEN, stage 3)**

- If it is deemed necessary, after all other steps are taken from within the school, a child may be referred for psychological assessment. The school will prioritise children for psychological assessment through careful consideration and consultation with the LS/RT teachers. Discussion to inform this process also takes place at the start of the school year in the planning meeting with our school psychologist. Where necessary or relevant, the principal will contact relevant outside agencies with parental consent. In the case of the school psychologist, the school will facilitate all meetings with parents etc;, and teachers will complete any forms to supply relevant information.
- Following assessment and identification of resources required, the school will take the necessary steps to ensure the needs of the child are met and that any extra resources are applied for. LS/RT teachers and principal will apply collaboratively to the NCSE (National Council for Special Education) for the resources, which may be in the form of extra hours of supplementary teaching, SNA support, equipment including ICT and or physical resources. A copy of the assessment report will be stored on a child's file and will be passed on to the teachers who will teach the child.

- In the case of a parent not consenting to the assessment of their child, or the provision of resources that may have been recommended by another professional, the school will communicate clearly with the parent in trying to encourage the parent to afford their child the opportunity to continue to develop to their full potential. In the case of parents refusing to consent to extra learning support help that may be offered by the school, the parents will be requested to sign a note explaining that they have refused the extra support. The school will maintain this letter on file. In exceptional circumstances, where the parent refuses to consent to a psychological assessment, which is considered essential by the school, contact will be made with the Education Welfare Officer to ask advice, as the Education Welfare Act makes provision for this situation.
- Extra hours of support teaching sanctioned by the SENO(Special Educational Needs Organiser) will be provided by Ms. Hynes, Mrs. Timoney and Mrs. Walsh. The allocation of these hours will be discussed collaboratively between these teachers and the principal. Efforts will be made to balance the Learning Support and Resource hours between both teachers.

### **Preparation of an Individual Education Plan, Pupil Profile and Learning Programme:**

- An individual education plan is prepared for each child in the school who has been assessed by a psychologist as having a special educational need. This plan sets out the learning needs of the child, the learning targets for the child in the specified timeframe, the teaching strategies for these targets, the date the targets were achieved, the materials and resources used in the teaching of the targets and the other people involved in the implementation of the plan for example; other staff, parents, other professionals etc; Often the child will be involved in setting some of the targets in relation to their own learning. The plan is drawn up collaboratively in the school, although the LS/RT teacher writes the plan for the children who are attending them for extra support. In cases of children who are assessed as having a special educational need but do not fit the criteria as laid out in the Learning Support Guidelines to receive supplementary teaching, class teachers may draft a simple plan setting out a programme of interventions. This plan is reviewed each term and this review forms the basis for the new IEP each term.
- A pupil profile is also in place for all pupils who are in receipt of supplementary teaching support. This profile outlines the background information on the child across a broad spectrum, including developmental, educational, social etc; The rationale for this profile is to enable the teacher to prepare a programme of work specific to the needs of the child. The profile also outlines strengths of the child and the learning needs, the learning needs are then broken down more specifically into priority learning needs, on which the programme of work for the child will be based. Also documented in the profile are all contacts with parents and/or other professionals, records of all testing carried out on the child including all screening and diagnostic testing and the learning targets that have been achieved by the child. The profile will therefore give a comprehensive account of the child as a learner and the progress that the child has made, giving a clear direction for the next steps to be taken in the IEP. These profiles are maintained on the child's file along with some work samples and test materials and an IEP if relevant.
- A long term plan is also in place for each child/group of children attending for supplementary learning support teaching, outlining the programme being covered. The period covered by the long term plan varies, although it will usually outline a plan for a month or a six week period.
- The LS/RT teachers also prepare daily/weekly planning notes. At the end of a month/instructional term, the LS/RT teachers give the principal a record of work covered/targets achieved in the case of the children under their instruction.

## **Monitoring/Recording Progress**

- The progress of the pupils is monitored through a variety of means. Teacher observation is a key tool in the monitoring of children's progress. This observation is by LS/RT teachers and also class teachers, and teachers can share information on this monitoring in the formal collaboration meetings which are held once per term and in informal meetings which are held on a regular basis. Any observation of progress will be documented in the IEP and pupil profile. The IEP targets will be small, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed. These targets will be used to measure the progress of children and records will be kept on progress for each target, including the date that the target is achieved.
- Intervention programmes for pupils with special educational needs are reviewed termly or every 6-8 weeks depending on the needs of the child.

## **Resources/Materials**

- An inventory of programmes, resources and materials available for use with children in our school is included as Appendix 1.

## **Exceptionally Able Pupils**

- The definition for "exceptionally able" pupils in the NCCA Draft Guidelines on exceptionally able pupils is as follows: ".....students who require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for the general cohort of students. "
- On rare occasions, through teacher observation, standardised and diagnostic testing, teacher designed tests and communication with parents, a child with exceptional ability may be identified. In such cases advice would be sought from the LS/RT teachers and an NRIT test may be administered.
- If it is deemed, in the opinion of the teaching team in the school that a child is, in fact of exceptional ability, the teacher will begin to differentiate work for that child in class. Every effort will be made to ensure that the curriculum will be geared to the particular talents of the child, and also careful observation and in some cases testing may be required to ensure that the child, although of exceptional ability in some areas, does not have a learning difficulty. The class teacher will make every effort to ensure that the child is provided with challenging work, to avoid the possibility of the child becoming "bored". Extra resources will be provided where it is deemed necessary and the use of IT and other tools will be encouraged.
- In some cases, the opinion of the school psychologist will be sought, and it may arise that a child with exceptional ability is prioritised for a psychological assessment. In such cases the recommendations of the school psychologist will be put into place. It may also happen that a child with exceptional ability will be provided with some supplementary teaching support by the LS/RT team.
- Parents will be involved at all stages, and any assistance from the school will be provided to parents. Parents will be made aware of the Centre for Talented Youth in DCU. See Appendix 2 for information provided by this centre for the school.

## **Special Needs Assistants**

- In our school we currently have one full-time and one part-time special needs assistant, Ailish Mc Grath and Claire Breen.
- While we currently have no need for induction of new SNA's, in the event of more SNA's being employed, our existing SNAs will act as a mentors, offering guidance and support to any new SNA.
- The contract as issued by the Department of Education and Science has been adopted in our school and signed by the relevant parties.
- The roles and responsibilities of the SNA are outlined in Appendix 3 of our policy (Appendix 1, from the DES circular).
- Our SNAs will take full part in all School Development Planning work in relation to both curricular and organisational planning. Our SNAs will attend all staff meetings.
- The SNAs will meet with the class teacher and LS/RT teacher in relation to the children in their care termly. The SNAs will be involved in the implementation of the IEP, and contribute towards the IEP also. To this end, the SNA will have a copy of the IEP and may have particular roles within the implementation of the IEP.
- Where deemed relevant the SNA may attend team meetings about the child in his/her care.

## **Success Criteria**

- Inclusion of pupils with special needs into our school
- Progress of pupils with special needs in our school (assessments showing progress)
- Enhancements of basic skills and learning strategies



- Evidence of improved learning through teacher observation and testing
- Feedback from parents at the end of each year
- Feedback from teaching staff, special needs assistant, pupil, psychologists
- Inspector's Report, etc.

### **Implementation**

Following our staff meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2009, this policy will be implemented with immediate effect.

### **Monitoring and Review**

This plan will be monitored on an ongoing basis by principal and staff of the school, in particular by the SEN team. The plan will be reviewed initially in June 2009 and on an annual basis thereafter.

### **Ratification and Communication**

This plan will be ratified by the Board of Management at the next meeting and will be communicated to staff on staff meeting on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January. The elements of the plan which are new or have been changed from the previous plan will be communicated to parents or other parties where necessary.

**Signed**

**Mr. Dan Scannell**

**Chairperson**