



Scoil Mhuire Moynalty

Special Educational Needs Policy

Introductory Statement

Scoil Mhuire is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. It is a mainstream primary school catering for a full cross-section of children. The purpose of this SEN policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other interested parties on the provision of effective learning support to pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties, as well as to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act, the Education Welfare Act and all other relevant legislation.

The school has the following provisions to cater for children with special educational needs:

- One Resource Teacher
- One Shared Learning Support Teacher
- One full-time Special Needs Assistants
- Four classroom teachers teaching 95 pupils in 2008-2009

Guiding Principles

We want all children particularly those with disabilities to feel that they are a valued part of the school community. We do this through inclusion which has at its core the following principles

- Setting suitable learning challenges
- Responding to children's diverse needs.
- Overcoming barriers to learning and assessment.

Rationale

The rationale of this policy is to ensure compliance with the Education Act 1998, The Welfare Act 2000, The Equal Status Act 2000, Disability Bill 2002, and the E.P.S.E.N. Act 2004.

Relationship to School Ethos

Scoil Mhuire Moynalty strives to create learning opportunities for all children and that commitment underpins all school planning and policy documents. We particularly strive to cater for the most challenged children as their presence in the school enriches the entire school community.

Implementation and review

The implementation of this policy commenced in September 2008.

Monitoring of this policy is an ongoing and developmental process. It will be reviewed at the end of every school year, or as circumstances warrant.

LEARNING SUPPORT

Aims

The **principle aim** of Learning Support is to optimise the teaching and learning process so as to enable pupils with learning difficulties to gain access to a broad and balanced curriculum, have opportunity of access to and appropriate education and achieve to their best of their abilities before leaving primary school.

Specific objectives of Learning Support

Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

- Facilitate pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level
- Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning
- Enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners in accordance with their own ability
- Involve parents in supporting their child's learning
- Promote collaboration among teachers

Guiding principles

The school recognises that effective learning programmes are based on the following principles:

- Effective whole-school policies & parental involvement.
- Whole school involvement
- Provision of intensive early intervention
- Observation of junior & senior infants throughout the year
- Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need
- Provision of support from third to sixth class where possible

Roles and Responsibilities

Learning support is a collaborative responsibility shared by all partners in the learning experiences. It is important that all partners contribute in the planning and implementation of our school plan on learning support. The following are a list of people who have a role to play in terms of Learning Support:

- 1) The Board of Management
- 2) The Principal
- 3) The Class Teacher
- 4) The Learning Support & Resource Teachers (LS/RT)
- 5) S.N.A
- 6) Parents/Guardians

1. Board of Management

The role of the Board of Management is to:

- Oversee the development, implementation and review of the provision of learning support in the school.
- Ensure adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the learning support teacher.
- Provide a secure facility for storage or records in relation to pupils in receipt of learning support.
- Budget for ongoing support for professional development in learning support for staff having due regard to the needs of other staff and the available financial resources.

2. Principal

The role of the principal is to:

- Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policy on learning support in consultation with all concerned.
- Work with teachers and parents/guardians in the development of the school plan on learning support in the context of special needs education.
- Monitor the implementation of the school plan on learning support on an ongoing basis.
- Monitor the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with the lowest levels of achievement.
- Assume direct responsibility for the co-ordination of learning support in the context of special needs services in consultation with the special duties post holder with responsibility for special needs.
- Oversee the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need.
- Keep teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedure to be followed in initiating referrals.
- Help teachers to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of learning support through provision of relevant publications and in-service.

3. Class Teacher

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

- Implement teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all pupils and to the greatest extent possible prevent the emergence of learning difficulties.
- Implement the school policies on screening and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in English and maths by co-operating and assisting with the administration and scoring of appropriate screening measures.
- For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, to collaborate with the learning support teacher in the development of an individual profile and learning programme by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve these targets.
- By co-operating fully with the implantation of the IPLP/IEP.

With regard to teaching low achieving pupils the following general approaches and methods may be used:

- Such children should be prioritised when accessing information from previous class teacher.
- Priority when establishing contact with parents/guardians should also be given to these children.
- Modify presentation and questioning techniques to maximise the involvement of pupils with low achievement in class activities.
- Place emphasis on oral language development across the curriculum.
- Providing pupils with extra tutoring in the key basic skills in literacy and numeracy.
- Set learning targets at an appropriate level.
- Provide learning activities and material which are suitably challenging but which also ensure success and progress.
- Carry out error analysis of a pupil's work to pinpoint specific areas of difficulty.
- Set up 'buddy systems' in class (high achievers collaboratively working with low achievers , for example, peer tutoring/shared reading)
- Apply assessments and tests which offer challenge and opportunities for success to children of all abilities.

A key aspect of successful learning support is a high level of collaboration between the class teacher and the learning support teacher. Central to this consultation is the development, implementation and review of the IPLP/IEP.

4. Learning Support & Resource Teachers (LS/RT)

The roles of the learning support and/or resource teacher are:

- To develop an individual profile and learning programme for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with the class teacher and parents/guardians.
- To maintain planning and progress records or equivalent for each pupil or group of pupils in receipt of learning support.
- To provide teaching in English/Maths to pupils in the school who experience low achievement, in accordance with the school's selection criteria.
- To contribute to the development of policy on learning support at whole school level.
- To contribute, at whole school level, to decision-making regarding the purchase of books and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties, having due regard for the needs of all children in the school and financial restraints. All purchases must be approved by the principal and/or Board of Management.
- To perform a defined role in co-ordinating the provision of special needs and learning support services in the school.
- Liaise with external agencies (such as psychologist, speech and language therapist etc) as necessary. Parents, teachers and principal should be kept informed.
- Maintain a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and special education support.
- Track the progress of pupils who have discontinued learning support.
- Provide a report on every pupil receiving supplementary teaching in early June each year.

5. Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

- SNA support is allocated to children following an application process through NCSE.
- The level and nature of support is agreed through consultation with parents, principal & LSRT.
- All SNA support is agreed to best provide for the pupils individual needs.
- SNA timetable is reviewed several times throughout the school year to reflect the changing needs of pupils within the school.

6. Parents/Guardians

The support of parents/guardians is vital to the success of learning support for their children. Specifically, parents/guardians can contribute through:

- Daily communication with the class teacher and the learning support teacher. This is facilitated by the use of notebook which learning support teacher and parent sign daily.
- Creating a home environment where literacy can thrive.
- Fostering positive attitudes about school and learning.
- Participating in the shared reading programme.
- Encouraging the child to visit the library.
- Developing the child's oral language.
- Developing the child's social maths.

Prevention strategies

As a means of preventing the occurrence of learning difficulties as far as possible, the following strategies are being implemented:

- The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to language development and literacy acquisition
- Delay in introducing the formal process of reading as advised in the Revised Curriculum
- The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to the teaching of maths
- Promotion of parental understanding and involvement through induction meetings for the parents of incoming Junior Infants, the provision of the 'Tips for parents' booklet and the arrangement of formal and informal parent-teacher meetings
- Whole school implementation of the Shared Reading Programme
- Class based early intervention by the Learning Support Teacher resulting in the provision of additional individualised or group support. In Junior Infants this will primarily be focused in identifying pupils who may be in need of learning support in language/phonological areas. Support is provided for Senior Infants as necessary.
- Ongoing observation and assessment of pupils by class teacher in consultation with Learning Support Teacher

Intervention Strategies

- The principle of *early intervention* applies, therefore, to pupils from Junior Infants to Second Class who are then given priority in the allocation of learning support resources
- In Junior Infants, pupils are observed by both class teacher and learning support teacher and allocated support where necessary.
- From Senior Infants upwards, all pupils are screened annually using appropriate standardised tests and teacher observations. This takes place during the summer term.
- Priority for Learning Support is given to those pupils who perform at or below the 10th percentile, excluding those in receipt of resource teaching
- In the case of pupils performing at or below the 10th percentile, the screening process is followed by a consultative meeting between the class teacher, the learning support teacher and the parents and supplementary teaching is offered
- In the allocation of places for learning support, the following are prioritised:
 1. Junior Infants as identified by the class teacher as having poor auditory, visual processing skills or delayed language skills.
 2. Senior Infants identified by the class teacher (through observation and results of screening instruments like the Jackson Early Literacy Test/MIST as having difficulties with literacy
 3. Children from 1st and 2nd classes at or below the 10th percentile in literacy acquisition
 4. Children from 3rd and 4th classes at or below the 10th percentile in literacy
 5. Senior Infants identified as having a difficulties with numeracy
 6. Children from 1st and 2nd classes at or below the 10th percentile in numeracy
 7. Children from 3rd and 4th classes at or below the 10th percentile in numeracy
 8. In-class support, where appropriate, for children from all classes up to 4th presenting at 10th to 20th percentile in literacy and numeracy

Provision of supplementary teaching

- The primary work of the learning support teacher is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils identified according to the criteria listed above
- Learning Support is provided to pupils in blocks. Children's progress is reviewed at the end of each block.
- One-to-one teaching may be provided where small group teaching has not been effective
- A system of withdrawal and/or in-class support will operate in response to the needs of the individual pupil.
- If a pupil is receiving support from a resource teacher in English/Maths, the pupil **will not** normally be provided with supplementary teaching from the learning support teacher as well
- If a pupil is receiving support from a resource teacher to address other needs (behavioural problems, sensory difficulties etc) it may be appropriate to provide supplementary teaching as well
- The learning support teacher will maintain the following information in individualised files:
 1. Individual Education Plan's
 2. Short-term planning and programme record
 3. Other relevant records
 4. Samples of written work
 5. Reading analysis records

Individual Education Plan/Individual Profile & Learning Programme

- IEP's are formulated in a process of collaboration between class teacher, SENO, parents and outside agencies. The plan includes:
 - The nature and degree of the child's abilities and skills
 - The degree and nature of the child's special needs.
 - The child's present level of performance.
 - The services to be provided
 - Targets and goals to be monitored and reviewed regularly.

The IPLP will be in accordance with the pro-forma as advised in the Learning Support Guidelines issued by the DES in 2000. The plan will address the pupil's full range of needs and will include:

- Details from class teacher
- Assessment results
- Other relevant information (e.g. reports from other agencies)
- Learning strengths and attainments
- Priority learning needs
- Learning targets
- Class based learning activities (if necessary)
- Supplementary support activities (including ICT)
- Home support activities

Each plan will be monitored through teacher observation, the keeping of planning and progress records and through the pupil's own feedback.

A detailed review will take place at the end of each instructional term. The learning support teacher and/or class teacher will meet the parents/guardians to discuss the child's progress in the light of the review.

Timetabling

- The provision of learning support is *in addition* to regular class teaching in English and Maths
- Every effort is made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curricular each time they attend learning support. **A flexible approach to timetabling is adopted by the class teacher, though class disruption must be kept to a minimum.**
- The provision of learning support may include withdrawal of pupils from their classroom and/or in-class tuition
- In-class support, if appropriate, will be jointly designed and monitored by the class teacher and learning support teacher

Provision of resources

- Resources for the provision of learning support include work provided from a variety of textbooks, library books and ancillary materials and oral language development materials. A variety of testing materials are also used which include standardised diagnostic and screening tests, reading experience and reading attainment tests, phonological awareness and numeracy tests.
- Provision of resources is provided by the Board of Management.
- Learning support resources will primarily be used in the learning support room. These resources will also be made available to class teachers when not being used by the L.S.T.

Continuing/Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching

- In general, children should not stay for more than 2 years in learning support unless they are still at or below the 10th percentile.
- The pupil's progress is monitored and he/she is retested at the end of the instructional term. Following the end of the instructional term review, as detailed above, a decision is made to continue/discontinue the provision of supplementary teaching.
- The decision making process involves consultation with class teacher, learning support teacher, parents/guardians and the principal. Account is also taken of the overall learning support demands within the school. The final decision rests with the principal.
- The criteria on which the decision is made include:
 1. consideration as to whether the pupil will be able to cope independently/semi-independently in the classroom learning context
 2. consideration as to whether the pupil has achieved some/all of the learning targets set
- A decision to continue the provision of supplementary teaching will result in a revision of the pupil's IPLP.

Referral to out of school agencies

- The learning support teacher and/or class teacher will recommend the referral of pupils to outside agencies. For example, the educational psychologist. Written reports and observations supporting the referral requests must be presented to the principal. The principal, having considered all of the reports available, will make referrals to the relevant professionals having prioritised the recommended referrals based on needs. (See N.E.P.S. document)
- The principal and/or learning support teacher and/or class teacher meet with the parents/guardians to discuss the need for referral and to seek consent. Should parents/guardians refuse, the principal will inform the Education Welfare Board.
- The principal completes the necessary referral reform in consultation with the appropriate school personnel.
- The external professional visits the school to meet with the pupil, parents/guardians, principal, class teacher and the learning support teacher, as appropriate, and the assessment is conducted.
- This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed.
- Where concern arises regarding the manner of speed of the follow-through post assessment, such concern is pursued by the principal with the out of school agency concerned.
- The procedure outlined by N.E.P.S. must be adhered to.
- Copies of all written reports furnished to teachers, parents/guardians, other professionals must also be given to the principal.

Communication strategies

The operation of an effective communication system between all the parties involved in meeting the needs of the child is considered essential. The various strands of the system include:

- Class teacher and learning support teacher following a low score on a screening test.
- Principal and/or learning support teacher and/or class teacher and parents/guardians following a low score on a screening test, including the seeking of approval of further diagnostic assessment and/or provision of supplementary teaching.
- Regular communication between the learning support teacher and the class teacher.
- Regular communication between the learning support teacher and the parents/guardians.

Success criteria

The whole school implementation of this policy will result in enhancement of pupils' learning in the following ways:

- Improved standards of academic achievement with the IPLP/GEP.
- Enabling the discontinuation of the provision of learning support based on positive assessment results.
- Enhanced parental/guardian involvement in supporting the child's learning needs.
- Increased opportunities for effective communication between school personnel in relation to pupils' progress.
- Learning support provision will be continuously focused on children from Junior Infants to Second Class but not excluding all others.

Resource Teaching Policy

When a child continues to experience difficulty and is not making above the 10th percentile in literacy and numeracy, having attended Learning Support for a minimum of 6 months, the child will normally be referred for psychological assessment, in consultation with parents/guardians, and may then be supported by a Resource Teacher.

Pupils who display major behavioural or emotional difficulties and who are integrated into mainstream education also may be allocated resource hours.

Children, who have physical difficulties (deafness, sight impairment etc,) are usually allocated resource hours.

The Role of the Resource Teacher

The Resource Teacher helps to provide an education which meets the needs and abilities of children assessed as having difficulties. In addition, the Resource Teacher should advise and liaise with other teachers, parents/guardians and other professionals in the children's interests. More specifically, the Resource Teacher has responsibility for:

- Researching the pupil's specific learning difficulty to become acquainted with this impediment to learning
- Develop an I.E.P. for each pupil who is in receipt of Resource hours in consultation with the class teacher and parents.
- Provide supplementary teaching commensurate with the child's particular and individual needs by setting specific, time related targets for each child and agreeing those with the class teacher.
- Assessing and recording the child's needs and progress on an ongoing basis.
- Direct teaching of the child either in a separate room or within the mainstream class.
- Liaise with outside agencies pertinent to the children in their care.
- Liaises with teachers regularly
- Meeting and advising parents/guardians, when necessary, accompanied by the class teacher as necessary.
- Meeting with other relevant professionals in the child's interest. A record should be kept of all such meetings.