



# *St. Mary's Secondary School*

*Convent of Mercy, Newport, Co. Tipperary V94 RY18*

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Registered Charity Number: 20148379



## **Special Educational Needs Policy**

St. Mary's Secondary School, Newport, is a Voluntary Catholic Secondary School under the Trusteeship and the Patronage of C.E.I ST. (Catholic Schools, An Irish Schools Trust). The School is grant aided by the Department of Education & Skills, and is a co-educational school.

**School Management:** The Board of Management of St. Mary's Secondary School is a statutory Board, appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

### **Mission Statement:**

St. Mary's Secondary School, Newport operates as a Catholic co-educational Secondary School, to provide teaching and learning of the highest quality for the benefit of the community which it serves.

### **In pursuing this mission we aim:**

- To provide a quality educational experience that caters for the full range of academic aptitude and abilities.
- To foster the intellectual, physical, social, cultural, moral and religious development of our students.
- To enable pupils to achieve their full potential academically.
- To promote the Catholic ethos and faith.
- To cater for the needs of the local community in so far as ethos, resources and facilities permit.

**Ethos:** As a CEIST school, St. Mary's seeks to promote the five key elements of the CEIST charter.

Promoting Spiritual and Human Development.

Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning.

Showing Respect for Every Person.

Creating Community.

Being Just and Responsible.

## **Aim**

To provide quality education that meets the actual needs of young people in the best quality learning environment. To create an atmosphere of trust and confidence between students, parents, community and staff which enhances self-esteem and self-worth.

To help pupils reach their full potential in all areas of life, both social and moral, recognizing that there is no single standard that applies to all.

To help pupils grow in confidence with a positive outlook on life and with due consideration for others and their property.

## **Rationale**

The school's inclusive education policy aspires

- To provide an inclusive learning environment where all are encouraged to achieve their potential
- To enable each student to develop social and personal skills, thus enhancing self-esteem
- To encourage students with special needs to participate in the full range of school activities
- To offer an education which develops a variety of skills i.e. practical, artistic, musical and sporting
- To allow special needs students access to the curriculum and encourage students to sit Junior/Leaving Cert examinations

## **The Legislative Context**

The Epsen Act (2004) defines Special Educational Needs as follows: "Special Educational Needs" means, in relation to a person, a restriction in the capacity of that person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition". Earlier, the Education Act (1998) defined Special Educational Needs as "the educational needs of students who have a disability and the educational needs of exceptionally able students".

At St. Mary's, we are committed, in so far as is practicable, to catering for the educational needs of the range of students included in both the above definitions, as well as the needs of students for whom English is not a first language, and students whose special needs arise from economic, social or emotional disadvantage. This Special Education Needs Plan is drafted in the context of the specific provisions and definitions with regard to students with disabilities and special educational needs, and the statutory requirements placed on schools, Board of Management and the Department of Education and Skills by the following:

Article 42, Bunreacht Na hEireann

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

The Freedom of Information Acts (1997 and 2003)

The Education Act 1998 The Education Welfare Act (2000)

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

The Education for Persons With Disabilities Bill (2003)

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

Other relevant Oireachtas Legislation and International Agreements.

## **Admission and Enrolment**

Admission and enrolment procedures for SEN students to St. Mary's are detailed within the St. Mary's Secondary School Admissions Policy.

## **Identification of needs:**

The following criteria may be used to identify students who may benefit from extra supports:

1. School links with primary schools. (SEN team members meet primary school staff)
2. School meetings with parents/guardians of incoming students
3. DRT testing
4. Primary school passport documentation including attendance rate, Sigma T and Micra T results
5. WRAT V testing where deemed appropriate
6. Referrals from subject teachers to SEN teachers

7. Referrals from other school teams e.g. Student Support Team & Year Heads
8. Educational Reports presented to school
9. Referrals through guidance counsellors
10. In-house literacy and numeracy criterion referenced tests
11. Analysis of house exams and CAT IV testing
12. Meeting with NEPS, Occupational Therapist, Speech & Language Therapist, Educational Psychologist etc.
13. Information from CAMHS if available

## **Meeting Needs:**

### **1. The subject teacher and the subject department:**

Section 22(1) of the Education Act 1998 emphasizes the primacy of the teacher in the education and personal development of students in schools. The subject teacher is responsible for educating all students in his/her class, including any student with a special educational need. The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in his/her classroom, including students with special educational needs.

It is the responsibility of the subject teacher to ensure that each student is taught in a stimulating and supportive classroom environment where all students feel equal and valued. Subject teachers should ensure that they plan their lessons carefully to address the diverse needs within the classroom.

In line with the Continuum of Support Guidelines, the subject teacher may gather information through formal and informal means, with a view to informing interventions. The subject teacher also has a central role in identifying and responding to students with additional needs, including differentiating the curriculum as appropriate. These responses will be informed and assisted by collaboration with colleagues, the SEN teachers, parents/guardians and possibly others such as the school's NEPS psychologist..

The subject teacher will also make specific accommodations for students within the class, as a result of concerns that there may be about a student's progress, application, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers and the development of a programme of differentiated instruction for that student.

All subject teachers should implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of students with special educational needs. Each subject department will include in its plan how it caters for the different students taking their subject. These methodologies include:

- Co-operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms
- Collaborative problem-solving activities
- Heterogeneous group work
- Differentiation\*
- Interventions to promote social and emotional competence
- Embedding of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching, learning and assessment

\*Differentiation can be achieved by:

- Varying the level, structure, mode of instruction and pace of lessons to meet individual needs
- Adapting lessons for students' interests
- Matching tasks and processes to students' abilities and needs
- Adapting and utilising resources, including use of technology
- Aspiring towards suitably challenging learning outcomes and assessing accordingly

Every student should be taught a curriculum that is appropriate to his/her developmental level.

### **Early intervention and prevention**

Our Student Support Team serves an important preventative and early intervention function, particularly in addressing the needs of students with social, emotional, behavioural and well-being needs. This team provides a forum to share concerns and to work towards solutions. It plays an important coordinating role and facilitates monitoring and review of students' progress.

## **2. Target Setting**

Best practice indicates that targets should be few in number; they should be informed by priority learning needs and directly linked to suitable interventions. Targets are based on the

evidence collected through both formal and informal assessment approaches. Parents are consulted when setting targets and reviewing progress. The views of students may be included in this process through direct involvement in the discussions or by gathering their views in advance of the review process. Targets will be measurable and observable and will reflect the specific special educational needs of individual students. Targets will be achievable within a specified time frame, they will also challenge and build on existing knowledge and address students' holistic needs. Targets and associated timeframes will be documented in the student's Individual Support Plan (ISP) as part of their student support file.

### **3. Monitoring and recording outcomes**

A whole school approach to the monitoring and recording of programme will be led by Management and SEN coordinator(s). Students' progress in relation to achieving their targets should be regularly and carefully monitored. This stage of the process is informed by effective measurement of baseline performance, including the use of criterion-referenced tests and other methods of assessment (for example, teacher-designed tests, checklists, samples of work, observation and reports from subject teachers, class tutors and year heads) that allow students to demonstrate their progress. This should lead to the establishment of specific targets to be achieved within a defined timeframe, as outlined below.

Monitoring outcomes is part of a dynamic process of identification, target-setting, intervention review, which in turn should lead to adjustments in support plans. The Student Support File (NEPS) provides schools with a useful resource to support and record this process. It includes a Support Review Record to guide teachers when monitoring progress and reviewing outcomes with parents and students and contributing to the development of targets. Such monitoring of progress, and subsequent adaption of support plans, are key drivers of effective practice.

In addition to monitoring outcomes at the individual level, it is also important to review outcomes at group, class and whole-school level. This review could include measures of attainment, communication, independence, attendance, social inclusion and well-being (for example, sense of belonging and connectedness to school) for students with special educational needs.

Parental and student involvement is an integral part of the student support file. In establishing the needs of the student, empirical data from standardised testing, school passports, other assessment and the professional knowledge of the school is of paramount importance in devising an appropriate plan. However, the allocation of resources on the basis of most need is integral in this plan.

#### **4. Allocation of resources**

In line with **DES Guidelines** additional teaching supports are deployed according to identified needs. Support is given in a variety of ways to effectively meet students' needs. Examples include:

- Team-teaching
- Small group withdrawal
- Individual withdrawal

The school engages with programmes in Numeracy, Literacy and Social/Emotional domains to assist all students entering the school.

Based on needs, some students will follow more intensive programmes. Some students will receive support within the context of a mainstream subject lesson through group or individual withdrawal or through a combination of these modes of intervention.

**Only in exceptional circumstances will students receive additional support in the form of individual withdrawal and this will ideally occur on a short term basis only.**

Resources are allocated based on need – students with the highest level of need have access to the greatest resources.

#### **5. Planning**

In line with Department of Education guidelines the core SEN team, under the direction of the Learning Support Coordinator, supports subject teachers in:

- Identification of students with special educational needs
- Setting targets as part of the student's ISP
- Planning teaching methods and approaches
- Organizing early - intervention and prevention programmes

- Organizing and deploying special education teaching resources

## **6. Timetabling practice/Rationale for the allocation of resources**

School management and the Learning Support Coordinator will seek to deploy resources appropriately by:

1. Using resources to promote early intervention and learning in an inclusive school environment
2. Allocating resources to students with the highest level of needs, as students with the highest level of needs receive the highest level of supports
3. Providing additional supports which are tailored to meet the unique needs of students, addressing social, emotional and vocational/life skills, as well as literacy and mathematical needs
4. Seeking to ensure that students with the greatest needs are supported by teachers who have the relevant expertise, and who can provide continuity of support
5. Supporting a core team of teachers for special educational needs. Members of this team have the necessary experience and ongoing access to professional development to support the diverse needs of students with special educational needs
6. A member (or number of members) of the special educational needs team, who has a recognized qualification in SEN, is assigned the responsibility for planning for the provision for special educational needs within the school
7. A timetabled weekly meeting of the SEN team and senior management is scheduled
8. Use of allocation is reviewed by the SEN team and school management. The overall allocation is accounted for both from a teacher and student perspective in line with appendix C of DES Circular 70/14

## **School-wide approach to provision for students with special educational needs**

### **School-wide Planning**

The school will adopt a school-wide approach to planning and implementation of early intervention and prevention programmes. The school-wide approach will involve collaboration



across the school community to improve student learning, behaviour and well-being. The school-wide approach will address the full continuum of needs ranging from milder and transient needs to more severe and enduring needs.

### **Role of the school Principal**

The Principal will have overall responsibility for ensuring that the special educational needs of students are met. The Principal will take general responsibility for establishing and promoting school-wide policies and procedures which support the learning of all students, including those with special needs. In particular the principal will

- Oversee a school-wide approach to assessment and screening to identify needs and to allocate resources
- Engage with feeder primary schools to support the transition of students with special educational needs
- In collaboration with the in-school management team, deploy staff, allocate resources, organise students and timetable
- Ensure an efficient system of sharing information of students' needs with subject teachers is in place, for example VSWare
- Facilitate continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to the education of students with special educational needs ensuring also that all school staff understand their roles and responsibilities in this area
- Form a special education needs team (SEN team) to coordinate the provision of special education in the school
- Delegate the performance of specific responsibilities to other staff members including the SEN team

### **The role of the Special Education Needs (SEN) team**

The SEN team will

- Coordinate data gathering, screening and testing
- Plan for the transition of students with special educational needs
- Plan, implement and review student support plans

- Assist in the communication of information regarding students' needs to subject teachers, year heads and other relevant staff
- Liaise with external agencies, NEPS, NCSE and other health professionals
- Plan and prepare applications for reasonable accommodations (RACE) in the state certified exams
- Assist in the preparation of applications to the NCSE for access to SNA support

The SEN team will work closely with the Principal, subject teachers, parents, the guidance counsellor, the pastoral care team and other support structures within the school. Members of the team will provide support to subject teachers to meet students' needs within their classroom and subject areas.

### **The role of the parent/guardian**

The school recognizes that good parental engagement is a critical factor in enhancing outcomes for students with special educational needs. Parents will be consulted in relation to

- The child's needs and strengths
- The support and strategies being developed to support their children
- Reviewing of student progress

### **Student engagement**

The school will regularly review its approach to student engagement and participation so that all students, including those with special educational needs, have opportunities to share their views on issues that affect them in school.

### **Engagement with external bodies and agencies**

Where appropriate the school will seek support and guidance from external bodies and agencies such as the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO), the NCSE Support Service, the Inspectorate and allied health professionals. This will be particularly relevant in the case of those students presenting with complex needs. The school will facilitate meetings between parents and these support services where appropriate. The school will endeavour to incorporate relevant recommendations from health professionals in developing support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support.

## Transitions

The school recognizes transitions can be challenging for all students and may pose even greater challenges for children with special educational needs. These transitions include the transition from primary to second level school and the transition from second level onwards. In managing the transition of students with special educational needs from primary to post-primary school, the school will liaise in a timely manner with the parents and the primary school. This may involve some of the following:

- Meeting between a designated staff member and a representative of the primary school
- Open evening
- Peer mentoring
- Request transfer of School Passport from the primary school
- One to one meetings between designated staff member and parent (and student) where individual needs of the students are discussed
- Sharing of information with subject teachers at the start of the academic year
- Induction session for incoming students

## Role of the SNA

The duties of the SNA are assigned by the Principal in accordance with DES Circular 30/14.

The work of the SNA should be supervised by the Principal. Those duties involve **tasks of a non-teaching nature** such as:

- Provide input with regard to primary care needs for the preparation of ISPs
- Assist with care planning
- Provide assistance and information in relation to care needs for preparation of physiological and school reports and files.
- Help with the gathering of data and information relating to the care needs of SEN students
- Assist in analysis of attendance for SEN Students
- Assist transition process in relation to care needs for students from one school to another and from one teacher to another.
- Assisting children to board and alight from school buses. Where necessary, travelling as an escort on school buses may be required.

- Special assistance as necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. helping **physically disabled** students with typing or writing.
- Assisting on out-of-school visits, trips to matches, walks and similar activities.
- Assisting the teachers in the supervision of students with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods.
- Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom (this may be to provide timeout)
- Administering approved medication
- General assistance to the subject teachers, under the direction of the Principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature. Special Needs Assistants may not act either as substitute or temporary teacher. They may assist SEN students to display work, ensuring uniform and use of journal is maintained
- Participation with school development planning with special reference to SEN students
- Liaising with subject teacher/resource teachers/Principal
- Assist in compiling information for staff on the care needs of SEN students.
- Work with teachers to promote independence of students as they progress through the school

### **RACE applications:**

Identification of students for RACE applications may be made using one or more of the following:

- Professional reports associated with the student
- Staff concern forms
- Expression of parental concern
- Expression of concern by the student

Assessment strategy:

- The preliminary assessment will be the WRAT V reading and spelling
- Depending on the nature of the accommodation required and if the results of the WRAT V assessment indicate that further assessment is required, reading and/or

written assessments may be administered. This may include a reading rate and/or handwriting rate assessment

- If the rate of candidate error meets the prevailing SEC threshold then application for the appropriate reasonable accommodation(s) will be made

Assessment timeframe:

- For Junior Certificate the assessment process for RACE will begin no earlier than the last term of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year and may carry on until the SEC closing date
- For Leaving Certificate RACE reactivations, applications will commence no earlier than the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> term in examination year. Where the application is a new application, the process may commence in the 2<sup>nd</sup> term of 5<sup>th</sup> year
- For the purposes of a RACE application a student will in general be assessed using WRAT V once only. However in borderline cases, consideration may be given to administering a second WRAT test. A decision to carry out a second test will rest with the SEN team

Communication:

- Initial phone call to parents to explain
- The result of a RACE application will be communicated to parents/guardians by issuing a copy of the SEC judgement

The school does not guarantee to provide reasonable accommodations during in-house examinations; provision of accommodations will be dependent on availability of resources.

## **Continuing Professional Development**

In an effort to assist the school in meeting the needs of students with special educational needs, and in order to increase capacity within the school, teachers, and other staff members, are supported by St. Mary's Secondary School in completing Continuing Professional Development in the area of Special Educational Needs. See circular 0009/2021.

However, any staff member who is supported by the school, must participate in the duties associated with this role, be they functions as outlined in the circular, or duties assigned by the Principal.

## **Covid Response Plan**

Each point must be adhered to at all times.

- All staff and students must wear a face mask while indoors.
- Wash and sanitize hands frequently.
- Classrooms must be sanitized after each class. Spray, wipes and blue paper rolls are supplied in each classroom.
- Should it be noticed that any supplies in a classroom are running low, please inform Marissa (cleaning staff) or Bill (caretaker).
- Covid reminders are read to students twice a week.
- Windows and doors are left open in classrooms for ventilation purposes.
- Seating plans are in place for each class, for contact tracing purposes.
- Students have designated entry and exit doors.
- Students have designated lunchtime areas.
- There is a one way system in place for movement around the campus.
- If a student feels unwell, they are sent to the isolation area.

## **Protocol for Students**

### **Use designated entry / exit doors**

- ✓ 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Years – Door by the library
- ✓ TY and 5<sup>th</sup> Year – Main door, 6<sup>th</sup> Years – Door by Mr. Brown's room

### **Use designated lunch areas**

- ✓ Eat in designated areas or outside. No eating in the corridors.
- ✓ 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Years – Base class
- ✓ TY - Small hall
- ✓ 5<sup>th</sup> Years – Gym
- ✓ 6<sup>th</sup> Years – Main hall

### **Corridors, Stairs, Bathrooms**

- ✓ Walk on the left of the corridor
- ✓ Follow the one-way system on the stairs
- ✓ Maximum of 3 people in the bathroom at any time

### **Sanitize / Wash your hands**

- ✓ On arrival in school and into each classroom
- ✓ Before eating or drinking
- ✓ After using the toilet
- ✓ After coughing or sneezing
- ✓ When hands are physically dirty (must be washed)

### **Classrooms/ Lockers**

- ✓ Lockers can only be used at the designated times.
- ✓ Do not congregate in groups at the classroom door.
- ✓ Sit in your assigned seats
- ✓ Have your own supplies e.g. books, biros etc.
- ✓ Clean your desk and chair at the end of each lesson
- ✓ Wait in your seat until your teacher tells you to leave the room

### **Masks**

- ✓ Masks should be worn inside the school building.
- ✓ Remember to put your mask back on when you have finished eating your lunch.
- ✓ Masks need to cover your mouth and nose.
- ✓ Masks need to be washed regularly.

### **Social distancing**

- ✓ Avoid hugging, handshakes etc.
- ✓ Keep a safe distance from others during your lunch break.

### **Health**

- ✓ Know the Covid 19 symptoms
- ✓ Immediately inform a member of staff if you feel unwell

### **Timetable for Review**

The Special Educational Needs Policy will be reviewed as the need arises, and/or every three years. The next review is scheduled to take place in 2025.

Policy development team: Ms. A O'Rourke, Ms. C Tierney, Ms. E. Mullally, Ms. S. Steiger, Ms. F. Ryan

### **Relevant dates for this policy**

Review of policy: September & October, 2021

Final Consultation with SEN team: 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2021

Draft amended policy presented to Student Support team: 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2021

Draft amended policy presented to Senior Management team: 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2021

Final Draft policy consultation with Staff: 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2021

Draft policy consultation with Parents' Council: 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2021


Draft policy presented to Board of Management: 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2021

Amended Policy ratified by Board of Management: 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2021

Reviewed, amended and ratified by Board of Management: 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2022

Signed:   
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 15/6/22

Signed:   
Principal, St. Mary's Secondary School

Date 15/6/2022



