



# SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN) POLICY

*Cashel Community School*

2022



## **Special Education Needs Mission Statement**

It is our hope that our school is a place where we promote and facilitate a whole-school approach to special needs education and so create a community of learning. In our policy and practice, we aim to nurture the values of hope, compassion and understanding in all of our students. We recognise each pupil as a unique individual with different talents and needs. We endeavour to meet their physical, intellectual and emotional needs through our student-focused programmes. In fostering an atmosphere of learning that is holistic in approach we hope to nurture each individual student's personal growth and development. We promote autonomous learning and strive to enable all to achieve their full potential. In Cashel Community School we offer an inclusive curriculum, which is relevant, realistic and co-operative, and we do so in active partnership with pupils, parents and staff.

## **Aims of the Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, pupils and parents/guardians on the provision of SET in Cashel C.S.

Circular 0014/2014 'Special Education Teaching Allocation' introduced a revised model for allocating Special Education Need Resources (SEN) to schools from September 2017. This document and the 'Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools Supporting Students in Mainstream Schools', produced by the DES in May 2017 are now the guiding principles that form the basis for support for students with SEN in Cashel CS.

Cashel Community School has been allocated specific number of additional teaching support hours per week by the DES, to cater for all students with an identified special educational need. These hours are to be used to provide support, based on the principles laid down in the above documentation so that the students with the greatest need, have access to the greatest level of support. This has been our normal practice to date. The school also has two classes in its ASD unit.

Within the SEN department students are provided with support based on their individualised needs. This support will be based on the Continuum of Support Framework set out by the Department which "recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long term", so that students will "require different levels of support depending on their identified need" (DES, May 2017, pg6).

In making provision for special need students the school needs to know whether the incoming student has had access to any of the following resources:

- Special Needs Assistant or Classroom Assistant
- A Special Class, Help for specific needs, support from a Resource Teacher
- Assistance with behavioural modification
- Psychological, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language assessment - report to be provided.

*(While there is no longer a requirement to have an educational assessment from a psychologist to identify if a student has a specific, academic based educational need to receive school support, parents must ensure that any Psychoeducational Assessments and/or reports from medical, speech and language therapists or paramedical professionals are sent to the school when a student is enrolled in the school. These are used to help explain and provide a better understanding of a student's strengths and needs, the nature of her/his difficulties and to inform relevant interventions including (where appropriate) an application to the SENO for SNA support.)*

- Any additional resources to help with their special needs
- Help in areas including visual impairment, hearing impairment, general learning disability or
- emotional disturbance
- Any resource in relation to travel or mobility, etc.

Other resources not listed above.

(Note: If an expert report is provided, it should include a workable strategy for addressing the needs, allowing for the resources available.)

Parents are strongly advised to inform the school as early as possible and discuss their particular situation well in advance of their child's commencement in first year. If an application for SNA support is required parents must advise the school of this when they accept a place in the school. *N.B. The deadline for applications for SNA support is generally in March. The school will use the resources provided by the Department of Education and Skills to make reasonable provision and accommodation for students with disabilities or special educational needs.*

## **Access to SE Support**

Support is based on the identification of an educational need. Examples of such needs include:

- Students identified as being below the 10th percentile in the CAT (entrance) assessment  
CAT4 (Cognitive Ability testing) scores are used primarily to ensure that classes in first year are of a mixed ability.
- Students who have had a psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support/Resource teaching.
- Students who are identified by teachers, parents or who request it themselves during the year can be accommodated within existing groupings if deemed appropriate (subject to appropriate assessment and review).
- Other issues which may result in an educational need e.g. social and emotional needs, physical, sensory or language and communication difficulties, or students whose education has been significantly interrupted. (This list is not exhaustive).

Students who are in receipt of SEN support hours may need to be assessed in school by the SEN team for the purposes of determining how best to support their individual learning needs. These assessments will consist of both formal and informal assessments. Formal assessment will include but may not be limited to the Diagnostic Reading Analysis, NGRT, CAT4, WRAT 4 and oral language assessment. Informal assessment will include but will not be limited to; writing samples, maths samples, learning style and in class observations. All assessment results are private and confidential to each student and their parents/guardians.

## **Models of SEN Provision**

The subject teacher has been explicitly recognised as having the primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in their classroom in the DES Circular 0014/2017 and the Post Primary Guidelines. As this specifically includes students with educational needs, collaboration between the SEN department staff and subject departments is invaluable in supporting these students. This framework helps us implement a staged approach to ensure that our support and interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support. The supports and interventions are informed by careful monitoring of progress. We aim to strike a balance between in-class support, group and individual support while ensuring that students' needs are met inclusively.

### **There are three levels of support**

**Level I: SUPPORT FOR ALL:** Whole school and Classroom support.

**Level II: SUPPORT FOR SOME:** school support for small groups and some individuals on a weekly timetabled basis or short-term intervention. Such support may include (but is not limited to) 'Team Teaching' which is used to support students in timetabled class groups in a learning environment where 'two or more teachers work together in a collaborative manner with a class of students who have diverse learning needs' (SEN Post Primary Guidelines).

**Level III: SUPPORT FOR A FEW:** This will provide individualised and specialised support for a number of students on a regular timetabled basis. Individual SEN support timetables are issued to those students who fall under levels 2 and 3 of the Continuum of Support.

In assessing and deciding which students need to be in receipt of supplementary teaching and which students may benefit from support within the mainstream context the following options are considered:

- **Individual Withdrawal** is used only where a student requires specialised individual support.
- **Small Group Withdrawal** is the preferred method of provision, with most students in resource and learning support getting their allocation in small groups. The organisation of these groupings is the job of the Learning Support Coordinator, in consultation with the Deputy Principal. Groups are arranged on the basis of similar need profiles and the

capacity to withdraw students at the same time. Withdrawal for small groups usually occurs during Irish for those students who are exempt and during continental language classes for those not doing a language.

- **SNA ‘in-class’** support may be appropriate in these withdrawal groups.

*Other interventions which may be considered include (but are not necessarily limited to):*

- **A Mindfulness programme** (15 weeks) may be offered to students for whom it is assessed as potentially being beneficial. Its aims are to help students:
  - feel happier, calmer and more fulfilled
  - get on better with others
  - help them concentrate and learn better
  - help them cope with stress and anxiety
  - perform better at music and sport
- **Organisation and Life Skills** lessons may form part of a programme for some students.

### **Reduced Timetable**

A student with SEN who experiences difficulty in coping with the breadth of the current curriculum is permitted to ‘drop’ a subject. This occurs only after all avenues have been exhausted. A consultation between the parents/ guardian and guidance teacher is also necessary. Parents must sign a consent form giving permission for a reduced subject load.

The period of intervention recommended for each student is dependent on the nature and extent of their individual need. The duration of provision is varied and is reviewed throughout the intervention. There are cases where support is needed on a short-term basis, after which the student is in a position to recommence with the regular curriculum. All decisions in this regard are discussed with parents/guardians, class teachers, the student, principal and guidance counsellor.

Suites of programmes have been developed to support teachers delivering SET-these are available on the school website; click on the ‘Our School’ and use the ‘drop-down’ menu.

## **Exemptions from Irish**

- Incoming first years with Irish exemptions are noted.
- Certificates of exemption from the study of Irish must be submitted with the enrolment application.
- The school will only consider granting an exemption for Irish when a written request is made by the student's parents and supported by an Educational Psychologist's report or other relevant documentation.
- The guidelines set down by the Department of Education and Science will be strictly adhered to (Circular M10/94). [http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/ActiveCirculars/ppc10\\_94.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/ActiveCirculars/ppc10_94.pdf) .
- Where possible, withdrawal for SET is arranged for students with SENs, who do not study Irish, during Irish time. This is not guaranteed and is limited by timetable restrictions and staff availability.
- Applications for Irish exemptions on the grounds of SEN are made by the SET Coordinator and signed by the Principal.

## **Exceptionally Able Students**

Cashel Community School is committed to providing for the particular needs of exceptionally able students. The school also has in place accurate assessment systems, flexible planning and provision, pastoral supports and monitoring strategies. The 'Special Education Support Service' advises that this definition applies to children with ability at the 97th percentile in at least one area (e.g. mathematical, verbal, spatial awareness, musical or artistic ability).

## **Access to Psychological Reports**

Individual files will be kept on each student. Information in the files includes psychological reports, results from entrance assessments, correspondence between the school, parents and other relevant agencies, and applications for support and concessions. Files are maintained by the Learning Support Coordinator and access is afforded to the following personnel- the School Principal, the Deputy Principal, members of the S.E.N. Department, the Year Heads and the Guidance Counsellor. Beyond these individuals, information regarding special needs is communicated to teachers on a need to know basis. In accordance with section 14. (1.d) of

the EPSEN Act 2004, the school 'shall ensure that all relevant teachers and other relevant employees of the schools are aware of the S.E.N. of students. Information is provided to teachers at the first staff meeting of each academic year. Other newly identified students are notified to the teachers as the year progresses. This is the responsibility of the S.E.N coordinator.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Partners in the SEN Team**

The SEN team comprises the Principal, Deputy Principal, the SEN Co-ordinator, the SE teachers, specialist teachers from the ASD unit, the Guidance Counsellor and the mainstream teachers. The team also includes any SNAs, as approved by the DES. The team is advised by the SENO and NEPS psychologist as well as other agencies and professionals involved with students SEN in the school. The specific roles and responsibilities of personnel are as described in the DES Inspectorate publication, Inclusion of Students with Special needs, Post-primary Guidelines (2007).

### **Involvement/Roles of the Educational Partners**

#### **Role of the Board of Management**

- To ensure that a policy is in place and that it is reviewed regularly.
- To make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.
- To ensure that the school meets its requirements in relation to inclusion under the Education Act (1998) and CL 0014/2017-Special Education Teaching Allocation.

#### **Role of the Principal and Deputy Principals**

- To assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policies on S.E.T.
- To coordinate the collection of assessments of incoming students and work with parents and feeder schools to identify students with special needs.
- To sanction exemption from certain subjects as requested.
- To ensure adequate timetabling of hours for SET support.

- To allocate time for staff to reflect, review and plan curricular arrangements, for the compilation of Learning Plans and Support Files, for consulting with support personnel and other professionals regarding the needs, progress, and review of individual students.
- To provide adequate time for review of policy by special needs team as required.
- To organise the in-service training in Special Education Teaching (S.E.T.) for staff.
- To allocate some time on teachers' timetables to facilitate starting the Learning plans/scheme of work process.
- To apply for SNA support as necessary.

### **Role of the Guidance Counsellor(s)**

- To work with the Special Needs Team and other staff in the implementation and review of this policy.
- To liaise on an ongoing basis with the other members of the S.E.N. Team and Pastoral Care Team as relevant matters arise.
- To provide a range of services to all students, including careers information, study skills and examination techniques, consultation with parents, referral services etc. with an awareness of the S.E.N. of students.
- To work together with the S.E.N. Team to conduct assessments of incoming first years and other students new to the school.
- To advise the Principal of any matters arising from such assessments.
- To support students who have been referred.
- To advise on supports available at third level for S.E.N. students e.g. RACE, DARE) and to assist students in accessing these supports.
- To act as an advocate for the S.E.N. student ensuring that her/his voice is heard when decisions concerning S.E.N. are being made.

### **Role of the SET Coordinator**

- To work with the Principal and Deputy Principal in the allocation of students to classes and the allocation of students to individual SEN teachers.
- To work with the other SEN teachers, parents and others in developing learning programmes for the students.

- To be responsible for timetabling provisions for SET Support.
- To be responsible for the submission of N.C.S.E. forms.
- To identify students who may be eligible for RACE and to organise the relevant testing and application process.
- To be responsible for liaising with external service providers e.g. N.E.P.S. and the Special Education Needs Organiser (S.E.N.O.)
- To coordinate the exemptions from Irish and the reasonable accommodations for the State Examinations.
- To liaise with the Deputy Principal to organise assessments with NEPS.
- To work with Special Needs Assistants.
- To communicate with the Principal, Deputy Principal and staff at the start of the year, any information concerning new pupils and update as required.
- To organise relevant testing and reviews as necessary.

### **Role of the SET Teachers**

SET teachers are expected to familiarise themselves with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and a variety of needs. They are required:

- To teach individual and small groups of students requiring learning support.
- To liaise with the S.E.N. team in the development of learning programmes for these students.
- To liaise with subject teachers and other departments on employing differentiated teaching methods and resources in their subject teaching.

### **Role of the Special Needs Assistants**

- To carry out duties as assigned by the Principal in accordance with Circular 10/76.
- To cater for the care needs of the S.E.N. Students including assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene.
- To provide special assistance where necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. writing, typing, photocopying etc.

- To provide assistance on out-of-school activities as may be required.
- To assist in the organisation and procurement of items needed for class e.g. textbooks, P.E. gear etc. and in the organisation of the student's locker.
- To assist the teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods.
- To encourage each pupil to become more independent and self-reliant.

### **Role of the Subject Teachers**

- To implement the S.E.N. Policy by considering the needs and learning styles of all their students and to employ suitable teaching methods so that all students can access the curriculum at an appropriate level. It is envisaged that a continuum of collaboration will evolve: sharing planning, sharing resources, sharing teaching, sharing observation and sharing improvement.
- To take steps to inform themselves of the special needs of any student in their class and to bring any concerns regarding such a student to the relevant personnel.

### **Parental Involvement**

Collaboration and sharing of relevant information between home and school are essential. Parents/Guardians through their unique knowledge of their own child have much to contribute to their child's learning. Parents/guardians should support their children and the school by ensuring that their child uses the skills and strategies that have been taught to them during supplementary teaching when doing homework etc.

The school believes that the effectiveness of any assessment or intervention will be influenced by the involvement and interest of the child and his/her parents. Both the parents and the students have important and relevant information to offer. Parents are invited to contact the SET department during the year in addition to meeting the SET teachers at Parent/Teacher Meetings. Parents are always contacted if a student is to be referred for assessment and afterwards to discuss the outcome of the assessment, the development of an appropriate learning programme and reviews of same. Parents are expected to support the work of the school with the student and to ensure the correct use and maintenance of any aids or equipment that are provided for the student.

## **Student Involvement**

- To contribute to the drawing up of learning programmes and the setting of learning targets for themselves.
- To contribute to the selection of texts and other materials that may help to reach these targets.
- To contribute to the review of learning programmes.
- To co-operate with the agreed programme and its evaluation by participation in appropriate tests and assessments.
- To become familiar with the targets which have been set for them.
- To develop ‘ownership’ of the skills and strategies which have been taught to them during supplementary teaching and learn to apply these strategies and skills to improve their own learning.

## **Reasonable Accommodations for State and In-House Examinations (RACE)**

Applications are made by the SEN Coordinator for RACE provision for students with SEN sitting a Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate Examination. Information relating to RACE is provided to parents on the school’s website and/or the SEN coordinator. The following are the range of accommodations available to the students which are applied for as per circular criteria. Accommodations are granted by The State Examinations Commission. From October 2016 the State Exams Commission SEC has operated a devolved model at both Junior and Leaving Cert Level. The school will make application for relevant accommodations for students who meet the criteria as laid down by the SEC at Junior Cycle and these accommodations can be reactivated for Leaving Cert. Further details are available in the RACE Guide for Exam Students at [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie). Where resources permit and when deemed appropriate, readers, scribes and other accommodations are available to students who qualify for such accommodations at mock exams and other school assessments. Students in non-exam years sitting a differentiated test will have that noted on their report.

## **Links with Outside Agencies and Services**

The EPSEN Act (2004) assures interlinking provision between the National Council for Special Education Needs (NCSE), The National Education Welfare Board (NEWB), and the Health Executive and school.

In accordance with this act, the school will work with the local S.E.N.O, the local N.E.P.S. psychologist, the Visiting Teachers for the Visually and the Hearing impaired, psychologists, or psychiatrists from the HSE and any other relevant professionals in providing an integrated response to the needs of any particular student. It may be necessary to hold case meetings with relevant professionals with the permission and knowledge of the student's parents (and their attendance) in order to determine the best approach and provision for the students in question.

Notes from such meetings will be recorded and maintained in the student's file.

This policy was ratified and adopted by the Board of Management on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023