

Special Education Needs Policy

RATIONALE.

Douglas Community School recognises the importance of providing learning for all students. Students with special educational needs require that these needs be addressed to provide equality of opportunity for each student in our care in order that he fulfils his potential. The school's Special Educational Needs (SEN) Department seeks to deliver this aim through planning and cooperation with all school staff and with the relevant external professionals and agencies. The Special Needs Programme in Douglas Community School seeks to accommodate each student in fulfilling his potential whilst simultaneously avoiding unnecessary alienation of the Special Educational Needs student from his peers.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Douglas Community School will make every reasonable attempt to adapt its learning programmes and environment to allow students with Special Educational Needs to fully access and actively engage in the physical, social and intellectual environment of our school. Such access will not be to the detriment of the individual. The Board of Management, Principal, Special Needs Department and the school personnel are responsible for the implementation and delivery of this policy under the advice and direction of the NCSE and the S.E.N.O in as much as allocated resources will permit.

AIMS OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS DEPARTMENT

To provide opportunities for all SEN students to:

Grow in confidence and self-esteem. Reach their full potential academically, socially and personally through the provision of an appropriate broad and balanced curriculum. Access as much of the curriculum as possible relative to the individual needs of the students. Enable each student to function as independently as possible in society through the provision of the educational supports that are needed to realise that potential. View learning as enjoyable and

accessible. Provide education for each student in a safe, caring and stimulating environment. Build on the strengths and celebrate the achievements of each student. Be respectful of themselves and others. Be an active participant in school life. Develop as responsible individuals. Be prepared for 'real life'. Enable the student to continue learning in adult life.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

To identify students who may require additional teaching support. To determine the most effective instructional and learning approaches for students. To provide on-going evaluation of teaching and learning plans and their outcomes and to report to parents, colleagues and other agencies as appropriate. To foster and support inclusion in the mainstream classroom. To encourage the continuous professional development of teachers in the provision of, the understanding, and, delivery of lessons that enhance the learning of the SEN student. To suggest referrals to other agencies where appropriate. To meet where appropriate with parents and other professionals in planning, delivering and evaluating any programme of work designed for the SEN student. To maintain records of the SEN of each student and to facilitate access to this information by relevant colleagues and other agencies as determined appropriate. To coordinate and support the work of the SNA on a daily basis to ensure the needs of the student with SEN is being met.

STUDENTS SERVED BY THE SEN DEPT.

A Special Educational Need is defined in the Education for persons with Special Educational Needs Act as: A restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of any 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. (Government of Ireland, 2004b, Section 1). Disability Codes:

No Category of Special Educational Need Incidence 1

Physical Disability Low2

Hearing Impairment Low3

Visual Impairment Low4

Emotional Disturbance Low 5

Severe Emotional Disturbance Low 6

Borderline Mild General Learning Disability High 7

Mild General Learning Disability High 8

Moderate General Learning Disability Low 9

Severe/Profound General Learning Disability Low 10

Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders Low 11

Specific Learning Disability High 12

Assessed Syndrome Low 13

Specific Speech and Language Disorder Low 14

Multiple Disabilities Low

OTHER: Students performing below the expected level in Literacy and/or Numeracy. (NCSE, Appendix 6; disability codes)

Enrolment of children with Special Educational Needs

Douglas Community School welcomes all students for whom an appropriate education can be provided. The Board of Management may decide on an annual basis the number of students for whom the school can provide an appropriate education with regard to facilities, personnel, plant and resources available. To meet the student's needs and to ensure the student has all the additional resources available to promote maximum inclusion in the mainstream school, parents may be requested to furnish relevant reports from Primary school, Psychological reports and/or other medical documentation as deemed appropriate. This will allow the school to make advance preparation for the admission of a student and to seek resources from the NCSE. If a student has no history of psychological or medical intervention i.e. if an assessment has not been carried out, written consent from parents to apply for such an assessment may be required. The NCSE has the authority to designate an appropriate school for a student with SEN and reserves the right to direct the school to enroll such a student; if the NCSE undertakes such a decision it will have due regard to the needs of the student, the wishes of the parents and the ability of the school to meet the needs of the student. (EPSEN, 2004. Section 10, subsections 1 and 2). The decision of the NCSE can be appealed by the Board of Management within four weeks of being informed of the

decision of the NCSE. (Section 10, subsection 3). The BOM must then prove that the school has inadequate resources to meet the needs of the student concerned. The BOM will undertake this action where circumstances make it unduly difficult for a student to adequately avail of the educational services of the school. The decision may then be reversed or upheld. (Section 10, subsection 5).

TRANSFER OF DOCUMENTATION/INFORMATION

Douglas Community School makes every effort to adhere to the recommendations published by the NCCA in 'Moving Up: The Experiences of First Year Students in Post Primary Education.

- 1.** Pre-entry the school makes contact with the feeder primary school to provide Douglas Community School with information about the school and each 6th class student receives a school prospectus. The Principal/Vice Principal personally visits each Feeder School.
- 2.** 6th class students can by appointment arrange to meet key personnel in the school to facilitate the student in becoming familiarised with the school building and where they will learn what is expected of them when they join the school. Opportunities for reading and understanding timetables etc. are provided.
- 3.** An Open Night is held for the parents of potential first years where parents can view the school, meet the staff and clarify questions with the latter. Relevant school policy, the structure of the Subject Departments and the ethos of the school is presented to parents.
- 4.** After formal enrolment of a student each feeder school will be contacted either by visit or phone call to determine the educational needs of each student. The primary school will be requested to forward documentation such as the completed Post Primary Transfer document designed by NEPS, Psychological Assessment Reports and any other Para-medical documentation (e.g. OT, Individual Education Plans, and results of screening/standardised testing and copies of Irish Exemptions where such documents exist). A record of the Resource hours received by each SEN student and the period over which the latter was operational will be requested. A note of the Learning Support Model found to be most appropriate in meeting the needs of the student will also be made.
- 5.** Where a Primary School has engaged in the transfer of an Education Passport (as set out by the NCCA), the school will retain the 6th Class Report, Standardised test results, the "My

Profile” and “My Child’s Profile” documentation. In addition, the Special Education Needs summary form and so forth will be retained by the school’s LSCO on a confidential basis.

6. All documentation is held securely in the Learning Support Coordinator’s Office.

TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY

In addition to the steps outlined above, the transition process is eased for students by the implementation and adherence to the following steps:

1. Use of a pastoral care system wherein each group has a class teacher and each year has a year head. The class teacher meets the students' regularly and any issues a student is having in school can be discussed during this time. The class teacher acts as a link person and an advocate on behalf of the student and the student can approach or arrange to meet the class teacher to discuss any difficulties he/she may be experiencing. The function of the year head is an extension of the responsibility of the class teacher with an added discipline function.
2. Careful monitoring of student attendance and progress throughout their time in Douglas Community School.
3. During this transition students have the opportunity to become familiar with school life in the supportive environment of their established school group.
4. An extensive number of measures are utilised to determine the most appropriate class grouping for each student.
5. Some students may have needs that warrant a more individualised transition programme which may begin earlier than that outlined above. The transition and integration arrangements for such students are needs led. This is particularly relevant to those children diagnosed ASD.
6. Parents are in receipt of detailed formal reports on their child which provides feedback on areas such as academic progress, attendance, punctuality, behaviour, effort etc. A Parent-Teacher Meeting is arranged for after the October mid-term so that parents and teachers can discuss the students’ progression.

THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS TEAM

While Douglas Community School takes a holistic whole-school approach to special educational needs in which all staff play a role, the management of SEN provision in the school is vested in a core team. The core of the SEN Team comprises of:

1. The Principal. The Deputy Principal. 2 learning support teachers (post graduate diploma in SEN) 1 professional diploma in SEN 5 additional learning support teachers. 3.5 Special Needs Assistants. A core group of subject teachers. The group work closely with subject teachers, Career Guidance Teacher, chaplain and year heads.

Team meetings occur as necessary throughout the year, at scheduled planning meetings and at staff development days. Other agencies are regularly consulted and met with as necessary including; NEPS, the visiting teacher service, the NCSE and SENO, the NEWB, Clinical Psychology, Paediatric Psychiatry, Key worker for children with physical and sensory disabilities, the HSE and training and occupational support services. The physical Special Educational Needs department comprises one Learning Support Coordinator's office. Classrooms are available for individual/ group withdrawals.

Parents.

Article 42.1 of Bunreacht na hÉireann recognises the family as the primary educator of the child and identifies the right of parents to provide for the religious, moral, intellectual and social education of their children. The latter role is affirmed by two other pieces of legislation, namely; The Education Act (1998) and the EPSEN (2004). Finn Valley College encourages maximum parental involvement and to establish a partnership on the educating of each student in the following ways:

1. Parents are provided with the opportunity to visit the school and obtain information regarding the school to facilitate them in the selection of a second-level school for their child.
2. An open evening is held annually for parents of first years so that any issues/concerns can be clarified and addressed by school management and the first year Year Head and Class Teacher.

Links between the home and the school are encouraged through this meeting between parents and key staff members.

3. An information booklet/school prospectus is provided to all students in sixth class from the feeder schools in the catchment area.
4. A clear daily communication system between home and school exists via the student diary. Any other communication system between the school and the parents of a student with SEN is at the discretion of the LSCO, the Principal and the parents of that student but must be proportionate to the care needs and must relate to any individual SEN student's learning performance on a given day.
5. Outside professionals and key staff members involved in the case may be invited to attend the meeting by the LSCO or Principal as necessary.
6. All parents are provided with regular formal reports on their child's general progress in the mainstream classes and on their learning development in Learning Support class where applicable.
7. Parents have the opportunity to meet with all teachers at arranged parent-teacher meetings each year.
8. Additional meetings may be arranged as necessary or at the request of parents. These meetings will be accommodated where the LSCO, Principal deems them reasonable and appropriate.

ACCESS TO RECORDS.

1. All SEN students who receive additional special education support have an IEP and a record of work completed. The record sheet and the IEP are completed and updated by the relevant Learning Support teacher. All of these IEPS and record sheets are housed in the learning support office. Every teacher involved in learning supports updates the IEP's where appropriate these changes are compiled and updated by the learning support department

2. The LSCO manages the file of each student with SEN. The student's official file is comprised of all reports by external agencies as well as the student's school support plus plan if relevant.

Any record of meetings on that student is contained in the file together with any teacher surveys executed on the difficulties/progress of that student.

3. At the beginning of the each academic year a brief overview of the nature of each SEN student and any change in the SEN of other students is verbally presented to the teaching staff and SNA's at the first staff meeting of the new academic year. The SNA's will be given access to all relevant files.4. Confidential information cannot be removed from the Learning Support Office or duplicated for any reason without the express permission of the Learning Support Coordinator/Principal.

5. From time to time, staff may be informed of an emergent need of a student and this is communicated orally/electronically from the LSCO to the relevant staff members. A copy of relevant memos is maintained on that students' record.

6. A list of each students SEN is available in the Vice-Principals office. This is updated when necessary.

SEN STRATEGY

'The withdrawal of students from mainstream class activities for one-to-one or small group teaching should be balanced against their real needs to participate in educational experiences with their peers'. (EPSEN 2004). Douglas Community School recognises the need to maximise the participation of all students in mainstream classes. The school seeks first and foremost to support the learning of the SEN student without removing him from his class group. The intention is to maximise inclusion whilst catering for a diversity of learning needs. The following approaches facilitate the school in doing this: • Students are carefully placed in the most appropriate class grouping. Careful consideration is given to matching the needs of each student with the programmes offered. When determining the class that would prove of most benefit to the advancement of the learning of any student the provision of suitable arrangements for the

provision of additional teaching support is considered. The latter is provided through in-class support, cooperative teaching, smaller class group and placing of a special emphasis on the development of Literacy and Numeracy. In order to provide the most suitable programme and experience for the needs of the students; a wide range of measures are utilised to determine a students' learning needs e.g. Entrance examinations, literacy and numeracy statistics from primary schools (e.g. Sigma and Micra tests) and meetings with 6th class teachers. All incoming first year students are also invited into the school to an individual meeting. All information is obtained from primary schools (under section 28 of the Education Welfare Act ,2000; and, information pertinent to the welfare of children can be shared amongst agencies such as school to school).

A CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT

Douglas Community School has adopted the three stage approach to supporting the learning of all students through the operation of a graduated and proportionate model that is made up of three separate school-based steps. The approach is underpinned by the following ideologies:

1. Effective learning should be provided for all students.
2. The adopted approach must be one of preventative support provided at an appropriate level rather than reparation.
3. It should function within a consultative and concerted teamwork and resolution- orientated agenda.
4. Interventions for those deemed has having additional needs should be appropriate in terms of time and value.

THE MODEL• School Support for All School Support for Some School Support for Few

1. At the Support for All stage students are provided with a suitable curriculum and their progress is continually considered and monitored. Measures of progress e.g. in-class in- house examinations, AFL, teacher observation, screening tests, teacher surveys etc. are used to inform the effective teaching of all students within the context of the mainstream class. In this way, the emerging needs of students are identified. A formal pastoral care system (Class Teachers and Year Heads) is used to provide behavioural support. During this stage, students who may require further observation or even intervention may be identified. Some students will be placed at the school support stage upon entry e.g. when their needs are known and documented and resources may have been granted by the NCSE.

2. The second stage of the model is to support students who are failing to make adequate progress despite the use of the whole-school strategies employed. These students may require additional support. The planning and intervention process may include: Consultation with subject teachers to determine the nature and extent of any obstacles to learning for that student. Consultation with parents. Information/advice/support from medical/Para-medical specialists. Meeting between the student and key members of the SEN team to determine difficulties being experienced by that student. Planning, in association with key members of the teaching team an intervention plan. Accommodations to support learning and/or social interaction as appropriate. The latter will be tailored to suit the student and his needs.

Participation in Learning Support. (In class support/group withdrawal) RACE.

The interventions may be planned to meet the collective needs of a group or the individual needs of a student. The third stage of the model caters for those students whose needs cannot be fulfilled by the interventions outlined above. This cohort of SEN students nationally, is representative of approximately 2-5% of the school population but is closer to 7% in our school at the moment. These are the students who experience significant difficulties and who may require concentrated, individualized interventions. The latter may take the form of any combination of the following measures: The development and implementation of a School Support for Few Plan is in keeping with the 2006, NCSE Guidelines on the Individual Education Planning Process. This plan will include reference to the following as per EPSEN, 2004; the nature and degree of a student's skills, abilities and talents, the nature and degree of their SEN and the impact of the latter on their education development, the student's present level of educational achievement, the Special Education and Support Services to be provided and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation. An individual Education plan may include:

Additional Professional Input e.g. psychological assessment by NEPS o Specialist interventions e.g. visiting teacher service

Each student with Special Educational Needs is recorded within their year group, the Learning support the student is in receipt of is listed, as is the method of learning support, and the personnel involved in the delivery.

MONITORING / REVIEW OF STUDENT PROGRESS

Parents and – where deemed appropriate or necessary – outside professionals attend meeting when necessary. The meeting/phone calls will focus on the progress of a student. This meeting/phone call will inform future action. The information presented at this meeting/phone call will determine whether a student will remain under the intensive “support for some”/“Support for Few” level or return to the whole school support structures to have their needs met.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT a balanced assessment system is used in the gathering of information. This process allows teachers to gauge student achievement and to inform the instruction in the student support plan.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT This type of assessment measures the progress of students after a period of time. Term reports record all students’ results.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

This type of assessment is more continuous and is largely used to enhance the learning of students during the teaching and learning process. The staff has committed to use the AFL approach and are encouraged to do so in several ways including encouraging students to assess their own learning and that of their peers. The provision by teachers of descriptive feedback is a key instructional instrument in progressing student learning. Students will be provided with the detail which will allow them to understand what they have done well and where improvements are necessary. Formative assessment informs instruction and can be as simple as the teacher observation of students on task. The SEN Department regularly surveys the mainstream teaching staff regarding the progress of an SEN student.

NEPS may also be involved in both summative and formative assessment of a student where necessary and permitted by the parent. The latter information informs future school support planning.

PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT 1. To monitor progress 2. To establish a baseline to a student’s attainment. 3. To guide the formulation of teaching and learning. 4. To apply for additional

teaching support from the NCSE.5.To apply for additional supports and other services. 6. To inform consultations with NEPS / Donegal ETB Psychologists. 7. To identify any student who should be referred to any outside agency for assessment and/or intervention after consultation with the student's parent(s).

Guidelines for the withdrawal of students for individual learning support.

The following guidelines should be adhered to when withdrawing students from class for the provision of learning support.

Where possible students who are exempt from the study of Irish should be withdrawn from that Irish class.

Teachers must where possible rotate what classes students are withdrawn from in order to minimize the students absence from any particular subject.

Teachers are to avoid removing students from Maths and English classes, unless it is the subject of that teacher.

When providing additional individual support for students, teachers must at all times be mindful of the following,

Support must be given in a room with windows.

The door of the support room must remain open.

Support may be provided in a room where a second teacher is already working with a different student.

Students are not to receive additional support in social areas, unless requested by both student and teacher.

LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY AND POLICY CONTEXT

This policy has been prepared in the context of the following legislation, regulations, guidance and policies: Education Act, 1998 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (EPSEN), 2004 Education for Persons with Disabilities Act, 2004 Equal Status Act, 2000 Child Care Act, 1991 Data Protection Acts, 1988 & 2003 DES Circular Letter 56/11 Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process (NCSE) Inclusive Education Framework – A guide for Schools on the Inclusion of Pupils with Special Educational Needs (NCSE) Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools (NEPS) Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities (NCCA) Moving Up: The Experiences of First Year Students in Post-Primary Education (NCCA) Douglas Community School Enrolment and Admissions Policy Douglas Community School Pastoral Care Policy Douglas Community School Homework Policy Douglas community School Guidance Plan In addition the policy is informed by a range of resources available on the NCSE, PDST, NBSS and NCCA websites **POLICY REVIEW** This policy will be review on a consultative basis with the relevant stakeholders. It will be reviewed annually. The date for the next review of the policy is September 2018.

Signed: _____ Date: _____