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SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY

Introductory Statement

This SEN policy was agreed by mainstream teachers, the SEN team and ratified by the BoM in September 2018. It is reviewed annually in the first term of every school year.

The following acts have been referenced in compiling this Special Needs Policy: Education Act (1998), Equal Status Acts (2000-2011), Education (Welfare) Act (2000), Education for Persons with SEN (EPSEN, 2004), Disability Act (2005). The Special Education Circular SP ED 02/05 and the DES resources published by the National Educational Psychological Service titled “Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support” including the following: a) Resource Pack for Teachers b) Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties c) Guidelines for Teachers, NCSE Policy Advice Paper No. 6, 2018 all inform this policy.

Rationale:

St. Comán's Wood Primary School needed a policy in line with legislation and Department circulars. This policy provides guidance on how we manage the Special Needs resources in our school; how resources are organised and what is expected of staff.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of School:

Inclusion:

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

“A child with SEN shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the degree or nature of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with the best interests of the child.”

St. Comán's Wood Primary School is an inclusive environment which embraces and celebrates the uniqueness of every pupil. St. Comán's Wood Primary School strives to nurture and cater for the needs of all pupils within the school. Pupils with SEN are integrated into mainstream classes; they receive instruction in all areas of the Primary School Curriculum and receive additional support within the parameters of the resources allocated by the DES.

Pupils from the Speech and Language/ hearing impaired class and ASD classes are included in mainstream classes when appropriate to promote social interaction with larger groups of pupils. (See Speech and Language Class Policy and ASD Class Policy).

Enrolment of children with special educational needs:

An initial application for enrolment is filled in by parents on-line in January/February of each school year. Offers of a place in the school are made on or before 10th February in each school year.

Following the offer of a place, parents of newly enrolled children are given a detailed application form to fill in. On this form parents are asked to give details of all assessments the child may have had. Parents are also given basic information on the school, stressing the importance of parents informing the school of any 'special need' their child may have. The school will use this information to make informed decisions, on how able the school is, to meet the child's needs. If resources are required an application is made to the DES. The BoM will make every effort to ensure adequate resources are in place for the enrolled child, before they are admitted to the school.

If a pupil has an identified special need and is already receiving a service from another organisation, parents are expected to notify the school. If parents do not notify the school of behaviour needs/special needs/assessments and/or services received by their child, the BoM (having carefully considered the safety of the child and the resources in the school available to meet the child's needs) may delay admitting the enrolled child to the school until they can ensure the safety of the child and other children attending the school. The BoM will act promptly to address the needs of the child, with the intention of admitting/re-admitting the enrolled child as speedily as possible. The BoM may have to apply to the DES for 'home tuition' for the enrolled child until necessary arrangements are in place.

The Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) is contacted at the earliest opportunity seeking advice on SNA assistance/technology etc. for the pupil. If deemed a health and safety issue, the BoM may decide not to admit the enrolled child into the school environs until it is safe to do so. Sometimes a transition programme from a previous setting, to the school setting, may be put in place and a reduced school day may be included in this programme as agreed by the BoM in consultation with all parties working with the child, including parents. Each case will be examined individually. Parents will be informed at all times of progress and meetings arranged with them to discuss concerns etc. The class teacher and SEN teacher will read all current reports on the child, prior to receiving the child in school.

A STAGED APPROACH (a continuum of support) to Meeting the Needs of Pupils with Special Educational Needs is used in St. Comán's Wood Primary School, a copy of which is on the school website.

Procedures for early intervention/ screening/ referral of children with SEN:

St. Comán's Wood Primary School promotes a policy of early intervention in order to support children identified as having a need for additional support from the SEN team. Parents will be informed at all stages of any concerns teachers may have.

Student participation and engagement in learning and other aspects of school life is promoted. Students will be facilitated to have a voice in decision-making about how they are to be supported in school.

The SEN team with the principal, assistant principal assigned responsibility for the co-ordination of Special Needs in the school and relevant teachers adopt a staged approach to intervention. If concern remains after intervention and additional support from the teacher and SEN team, the school may request a consultation and assessment of the pupil's need from a specialist outside the school. Where this is the case, the parents' permission in writing will be sought to do so. If the parents refuse to give their permission for a pupil to receive extra support, a written record of their decision, signed by parents will be kept in the child's file. Following meetings with staff, should parents continue to refuse to give their consent to have a pupil assessed, the Board of Management may apply to the Circuit Court for an order to have the pupil assessed (Education Welfare Act). Every effort is made in the school to

develop strong, high-trust relationships with parents. For this reason an application to the Circuit Court has to date never been required.

Special education team meetings:

Teachers on the Special Needs team meet outside school hours within time permitted by Haddington Rd. hours, with the Special Needs co-ordinator to plan and share practice. Minutes will be taken and filed by the Special Needs co-ordinator.

Class teachers have regular informal discussions with SET teachers with regard to the progress of the children in their care. Time-tabled formal meetings between the class teachers and SET teachers are arranged by the SEN coordinators/ SET teachers at least twice yearly (September and at the end of each term as required) during school hours, to discuss the progress of children currently receiving additional support from the SEN team and other children in their classes whom they feel are at risk and may benefit from extra support.

The senior management person (AP I) responsible for coordinating Special Needs on the senior and junior sites will arrange the dates for these meetings.

School Support Plans

School Support Plans (previously IEPs) are drafted/reviewed/updated following SET meetings. Parent-Teacher meetings are held in the first term (November/December) of each school year. Parents of children with special needs are invited to meet with an SEN teacher in September. If a further meeting is requested by parents this will be facilitated.

STAFF ROLES

Principal:

The principal Úna Feeley, is the overall manager of the school appointed by the Board of Management on behalf of the patron. She is accountable to the Board of Management for the organisation and management of all resources (human and physical) in the school.

All teachers/staff:

- Treat all information relating to pupils with access to SNA support confidentially and to share such information only with those who need to know.
- Release the SNAs from break time supervision duty punctually so that SNAs can return to their classroom and care duties without delay after their break.
- All teachers update the 'log of actions' as they deem necessary i.e. that an entry may inform the team working with the child e.g. behaviour incident on the yard etc.

Special Needs co-ordinators

The Board of Management has appointed Frances Mitchell, Assistant Principal I as the co-ordinator of Special Needs in the school. She is responsible for the following:

- ensuring that each child has an on-line School Support file.
- applying to the DES for resources including assistive technology/furniture/transport/ bus escorts etc.
- co-ordinating meetings with the SET team in the school at least once termly
- Providing up-to-date information to the SET team as required
- Ensuring the staged approach/ continuum of support is used effectively in the school
- liaising with outside agencies and arranging meetings (forwarding schools, NEPs, Public Health Nurse, HSE, SENO etc.)
- Selecting pupils for NEPs.
- advising staff regarding support available from outside agencies

She is assisted in her role by Nicola Gately, Assistant Principal on the senior site.

Deputy Principal

- Assigning role specific tasks to be completed by the SNAs in association with the class teacher.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the SNAs contribution to the needs of designated children
- Devise a list of classroom tasks to be undertaken by the SNA during pupil non contact time e.g. Staff meetings, 10 minutes before/after school, etc.
- Managing areas of conflict which may arise, with the assistance of the Principal

Special Educational Teachers (SETs)

A Special Education teacher (SET) may be assigned to meet the needs of children with resource hours/ learning support hours and/or EAL. This promotes an integrated, team approach. The SET teacher provides additional/supplementary support for pupils with educational needs. The SET teacher identifies the pupil's strengths and needs, teaching strategies specific to the learning needs of the pupil, sets targets, and plans a programme in consultation with the class teacher and parents. The SEN teacher supports the class teacher in their work. This may be in the form of 'station teaching' in the classroom, within which the needs of SEN children are identified and catered for, where children learn from each other in both 'ability' and 'mixed-ability' groupings as deemed appropriate by the teachers in consultation with each other.

- SETs assume responsibility for convening planning and consultation meetings with the SEN child's class teacher and other relevant parties including the parents, SNA, and the principal. The purpose of these meetings will be to develop and revise the child's 'School Support Plan' (formerly known as the child's IEP).
- The SET ensures the School Support Plan is kept up to date with all details required, recorded.
- SETs implement that part of the child's School Support Plan assigned to the Special Education Teacher which is developed in consultation with the class teacher and all relevant parties.
- SETs monitor, record and report progress to the child's class teacher on targets set for the child informally and at planning/consultation meetings.

Procedures for one-to-one teaching/ SNA care

The procedure for providing one-to-one teaching to children by a Special Education Teacher (SET) and/or care by a Special Needs Assistant (SNA) is guided by the child's school support plan and **Care plan** (if requiring one-to-one access by an SNA). One-to-one support is typically reserved for children with the highest level of need.

The SET, in collaboration with the class teacher and parents/guardians, develops a specific plan. This may, if the child needs it, include a **Care Plan** which is developed in collaboration with the relevant teaching staff, parents and SNA. This plan outlines:

- The child's specific needs.
- The specific targets and expected outcomes
- The nature, frequency, and duration of the one-to-one support and/or care.

Parent/Guardian Involvement: Parents/guardians are actively involved in the process, informed of the decision, and their agreement is sought for the one-to-one support and/or care.

The actual delivery of one-to-one teaching and/or care must adhere to professional and **Child Protection safety guidelines**:

- Timetabling: The SET/ SNA in consultation with the class teacher, create a timetable for the

sessions.

- Environment: To comply with child protection guidelines, one-to-one teaching is conducted in an environment that is visible and open, such as a room with a glass viewing panel in the door, or with the door ajar. The teacher is often positioned facing the door.
- Garda Vetting: All personnel, including the SET, SNA and any substitute teachers or external professionals involved in one-to-one teaching, must be Garda vetted. Student teachers or work experience students are generally not permitted to be alone with a pupil in a one-to-one setting.
- The focus is on the child's priority learning needs by the SET or care needs by the SNA.

Class Teachers

- The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class (es), including those selected for supplementary teaching.
- In consultation with the SET teacher the class teacher ensures that supplementary teaching is supplementary to the literacy/numeracy teaching in the classroom not 'instead of'.
- Class teachers plan for pupil class-level, age-appropriate learning outcomes, in line with the curriculum, noting in their planning that learning outcomes are differentiated using the language: 'all will', 'some will', 'a few will'.
- Class teachers group pupils for instruction (sometimes mixed ability, sometimes similar ability), providing lower achieving pupils with strategies for reading and problem solving, adapting learning materials for lower-achieving pupils.
- Class teachers contribute to planning and consultation meetings convened by the child's special education teacher (SET) for the purposes of developing and reviewing the child's School Support Plan when appropriate. The targets set for the child are not 'to catch up with class work' but are set for them individually and are rooted in their learning needs and recorded in the School Support Plan. They are specific, manageable, achievable, realistic and timed. It is not the role of the SET to assign homework or to correct class work.
- While the SET is responsible for keeping the School Support Plan up-to-date, **keeping the 'log of actions' up to date is the responsibility of all staff.** Staff initial any entry they make in the 'log of actions' so that colleagues know who to go to if they require further information on the entry.
- Where supplementary teaching cannot be provided for a pupil, or is being phased out or discontinued, the class teacher will need to develop and implement a support programme that meets the pupil's changing needs, in consultation with the SEN teachers working with the children in his/her class. This should be referred to in the log of actions.
- The class teacher assumes responsibility, in collaboration with the class SNA, for developing and revising an inclusion/care plan for those children with access to SNA support.
- The class teacher ensures tasks he/she allocates to the SNA adhere to the tasks listed under primary and secondary care needs in the [SNAPolicy](#) and allocated by the principal/DP.
- The class teacher consults and collaborates with the SNA with regard to planning, review and timetabling. The SNA will have insights into the 'child's' strengths and learning needs which may inform teacher decisions. Planning together is recommended and will inform better professional practice.
- Class teachers share information with the SNA about the 'child' with access to SNA support that is relevant to the performance of his/her duties.
- The class teacher provides a suitable seating arrangement for the SNA and child/children in the mainstream setting with the SNA sitting with and/or observing the children - sometimes from a distance.

SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS [SNA Assistant Policy](#) available on the school website and in the staff shared Google Drive.

SNAs are appointed by the Board of Management subsequent to the allocation of SNAs to the school, by the DES. Depending on the cumulative number of hours allocated to the school, they may be appointed on a full-time or part-time basis.

Assessment:

See policy on Assessment

Learning support:

In June children below the 12th percentile (2nd to 6th classes) in standardized tests will be identified and targets set for them, ready to address early in September, through withdrawal/in-class support, individually or in differentiated small groups as decided by the class teacher in consultation with the SET. Children who score at or below the 2nd percentile are accorded a high priority for learning support and review.

On or before the last week in June, mainstream class teachers will group their children into 3 or 4 groups (noting the name of the mainstream teachers to which the children are allocated the following year) indicating whether the children are 'average', 'above average' or 'below average' in literacy and numeracy. These lists will assist the forwarding mainstream teachers in grouping children for station/small group teaching in September.

Mid-late October children in Junior Infants experiencing difficulties will be identified including those with Speech and Language difficulties. Identification will be based on the class teachers' and SEN teachers' observations. Parents will be informed.

In the case of children with learning difficulties, if the class teacher's plan fails to achieve the desired outcome, then the child is referred to the SET team, with parental permission. The SET team using the STAGED APPROACH/CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT decides how to progress in consultation with the Special Needs co-ordinators and class teacher.

Speech and language class: (see [Speech and Language Class policy](#))

The maximum number of pupils in the language class is 7. There is an admissions team meeting held in May to discuss and decide candidates for the following year. This is attended by the Senior Speech and Language therapist for the area; the class occupational therapist; the class Speech and language therapist; the class teacher and the principal. Strict criteria are used when making decisions on what children will be enrolled in the Speech and language class, the following year. The Speech and Language therapist visits the school three days a week and the Occupational therapist visits the school one day a week. The OT works with the children in the sensory room and school hall. The Speech and Language therapist has been assigned an office in the school. Pupils spend on average 1-2 years in the language class before returning to their respective mainstream schools. As noted earlier, Pupils from the *Speech and Language class* are included in mainstream classes for Aistear, physical education, religious instruction and other areas to promote social interaction with larger groups of pupils. For more information, please refer to the separate policy on the Speech and Language class.

English as an Additional Language (EAL):

EAL pupils receive support either individually or in a group, depending on the needs of the child. Teachers are aware of the merits of immersion in a language and for this reason support is provided primarily in the classroom. Oral language communication is the primary focus of the teaching, along with reinforcement of the mainstream curriculum. Children with English language difficulties are assessed in June, by the SEN team and children requiring language support for the following school year are identified and this is communicated to class teachers.

Many classes choose to have an 'Oral Language' station, supported by the SEN team, during station teaching. Sometimes this station is organised in the classroom and sometimes outside the classroom,

depending on the size of the room. EAL children are given particular attention at the 'oral language' station. Careful attention is given by class teachers to developing listening, speaking and oral language skills (see English whole school plan)

Approaches to involving parents and outside agencies

Parents are invited to meet the SET teacher in September/October to discuss the needs of the pupil with Special Needs and the nature and content of the intervention. Parents are free at any time to make an appointment with the class teacher, SET teacher to discuss any concerns they may have. Parent/teacher meetings are held in November/December of each year. As regards other personnel, the SET teacher will attempt to communicate with the specialist involved, as the need arises, to obtain and share information regarding the pupil, which may aid the SET teacher when planning a programme for the child. Outside personnel (occupational therapist, physiotherapist) may visit the school to provide intervention to a particular child.

OUTSIDE AGENCIES

External agencies that support practice in the school and advise staff include the Brothers of Charity, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), HSE, NEPs, NEWB, OIDE, NCSE (National Council for Special Education), Túsla, the Gardaí the local play group directors and the Children and Young Peoples Services committees (CYPSC).

National Education Welfare Board: Olivia Ward (Deputy Principal) liaises with the National Education Welfare officer monthly and reports to her, on school attendance. The Education Welfare Officer visits the school regularly. Attendance is tracked in the school, using a data management system – Databiz Solutions. When children miss 15 days or more, parents are asked to meet with the Deputy Principal and give reasons as to why their child is not attending school. If a child misses 21 days or more parents are invited to attend a meeting with the Education Welfare officer and Deputy Principal. If parents fail to attend this meeting the Education Welfare officer calls to the home and reports back to the school. A court order has been issued on some parents for non-attendance at school. However, it is noted that attendance has improved in the school over recent years.

Local pre-schools: In May of every year the principal meets with the directors of the six pre-schools in the town. At this meeting information is shared in order to ease the transition of preschoolers into Junior Infants. The directors advise the principal on how the school can best meet the needs of the children including those with special needs. If deemed helpful the SNA assigned to a child, due to start school the following September will visit the pre-school to observe the child and get advice from pre-school staff.

Approaches to timetabling:

The SET team liaise with the class teachers in June to draw up a timetable for provision of resource, learning support, language teaching. The following September some minor adjustments may/may not be made.

Work Schedule of the SET teachers:

In June, the principal allocates SET teachers to class levels depending on the level of need at different class levels and in individual classrooms. The principal uses whole Class Provision lists to make decisions regarding allocation.

Health and Safety:

All appropriate measures are taken to ensure the safety of each pupil with SEN. Depending on the severity of need all staff members will be informed and alerted to possible hazards. To ensure the safety of pupils with SEN on the schoolyard, the Special Needs Assistants are present for the duration of yards breaks along with the teachers on duty. Should a pupil with acute safety needs enrol in the school, the health and safety policy will be reviewed for that pupil.

Administration of medicine: (refer to Administration of Medicine school policy)

St. Comán's Wood Primary School does not administer **un**prescribed medicine to pupils within the school. Parents may administer medicine to their child on the school grounds if it is necessary. Medical information is recorded on the enrolment form. **PRESCRIBED MEDICATION MAY BE ADMINISTERED IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES (SEE POLICY)**

Code of Behaviour: (see the policy)

In general pupils with SEN will follow the code of behaviour throughout the school. In extenuating circumstances where a pupil has a behaviour/s of concern, an individual behaviour management plan will be drawn up by the principal, class teacher, SEN teacher, SNA, parents and if deemed necessary advice will be sought from outside expertise working with the child. The team when implementing the personal behaviour plan may devise personal rewards and sanctions.

Transfer between schools:

- When a pupil transfers to St. Comán's Wood Primary School from another school, St. Comán's Wood Primary School will contact the previous school to inform them of the pupil's enrolment.
- If a pupil leaves St. Comán's Wood Primary School to go to another school; the pupil will be marked absent on the roll, and will remain on the register until such time as the school is notified that the pupil is enrolled in another school.
- When a pupil transfers to post-primary education, with parental consent, copies of assessments/reports will be forwarded to the relevant primary/ post-primary school. Information on all children in 6th class is transferred to the relevant post-primary school using the DES transfer form. It is also the duty of the parents of the pupil(s) with SEN to inform the post-primary school of their child's needs.

POLICY FOR THE PROVISION OF TRAVELLER AND ROMA EDUCATION

Diversity and difference characterises the society in which children live. A respect for and appreciation of human and cultural diversity is promoted and celebrated in St. Comán's Wood Primary School. The mission statement of the school states that "*Each child through positive learning experiences will be stimulated to achieve his/her full potential, face life confidently, find fulfilment and be respectful in an ever-changing world*". The education of traveller pupils in the school sets out to fulfil the ideals presented in the above statement.

Aims of Traveller and Roma Education:

1. The traveller and Roma pupil will add to the existing diversity of the school, contribute to the learning experiences of all pupils, and leave the school proud of his/her own cultural identity
2. To provide an opportunity for pupils from varying backgrounds to develop their full potential in an atmosphere conducive to their needs, where they will feel accepted, encouraged, respected and supported.

Promoting the culture of the Travelling Community:

St. Comán's Wood Primary School endeavours to acknowledge and celebrate the culture of the Travelling community throughout the school in the following ways:

- Displaying posters and artwork in the corridors and classrooms that reflect the diversity of the school population
- Ensuring that textbooks and material are free of bias and using materials and books that reflect Traveller culture
- Providing opportunities for collaborative learning through teaching methodologies
- Implementing a curriculum that is child-centred and relevant to the different groups in the school
- Fostering the principles of justice, equality and freedom of expression in all everyday dealings

- Inviting parents from the travelling community to come into the school and share their knowledge of the traveller culture with the children.

Traveller and Roma identify and the culturally affirmative school:

Traveller and Roma culture and lifestyle is acknowledged in the school in the following ways:

- The school plan has a positive and active policy on the promotion of an inclusive intercultural ethos, including a strong anti-racist and anti-bullying strategy
- Parents are welcome to make an appointment to speak with the principal and/or teacher
- St. Comán's Wood Primary School supports the involvement of parents in all aspects of their child's school life
- The Traveller and Roma pupil is involved in all activities, listened to and valued, and has a sense of belonging in the school
- The personal experiences of the pupil are used as a basis on which to develop new learning experiences.
- Pupils from the Travelling and Roma Communities are fully included in mainstream classes.
- Traveller and Roma pupils are placed in age-appropriate classes.
- With parental consent, pupils from the travelling and Roma communities receive additional support from the SEN team according to their needs.

Attendance:

As highlighted in the *Survey of Traveller Education Provision*, poor attendance of traveller pupils in Irish primary schools was recorded. Attendance data shows evidence that the Roma community also have poor attendance. It will be a priority of the school to improve the attendance of both traveller and Roma pupils. Parents need to realise that there will be follow-up from the school in instances of absenteeism. Parents will be encouraged to make greater efforts to ensure their children are attending regularly. Regular attendance by pupils will be rewarded and the pupils will act as role models for other traveller and Roma pupils in the school. Traveller and Roma parents need to be convinced of the value of education. Involving parents in school life, communicating, and keeping in regular contact with them is essential also to help convince them of the value of school.

Literacy Levels:

As a result of poor attendance, some traveller and Roma pupils show poor levels of literacy. Pupils showing difficulties are monitored and their needs are met through a staged approach (see *Staged Approach Model* above). Impediments to traveller and Roma pupils' progress in literacy include poor attendance and lack of parental interest in education. Therefore, educating parents about the importance of literacy and the provision of storybooks in the home from a young age is important. Parents need to support their children and encourage literacy where possible. Children from the travelling and Roma communities posing with reading difficulties receive additional support from the SEN team according to their needs.

After School Activities:

Children from the travelling and Roma communities are encouraged to attend after school activities i.e homework club, sport and activities. Some do attend. The school subsidises the costs when necessary.

RATIFICATION:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Comán's Wood Primary School in September, 2018.

It will be reviewed annually.

Review and Update ratified by the BoM

Marie Dooley

13th February, 2025

Chairperson