

# **A WHOLE SCHOOL POLICY FOR LEARNING SUPPORT AND RESOURCE TEACHING FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

## **Introduction.**

The development of a whole school policy must be real, relevant operable and agreed. It must lead to everyday action. It is a method for clarifying beliefs, accepting responsibilities at school level and making the best use of available expertise and resources. It must be based on a clear and firm statement of belief, which will inform the decisions and actions of the staff in our everyday work as teacher. It will require frequent review as the school is in constant state of change. This policy was formulated by the staff of Ss. Peter & Paul's in consultation with Board of Management and parents.

It is based on shared values and joint ownership. This policy is designed for the purpose of providing an overview of learning support and special needs provision in our school and as a basis from which more specific planning can take place.

## **Definition of Special Education.**

Special Education is defined as 'any educational provision which is designed to cater for pupils with special educational needs, and is additional to or different from the

provision which is generally made in ordinary classes for the pupils of the same age.' (Special Education Review Committee (SERC), 1993:18)

## **Rationale.**

In our school we are committed to providing a continuum of support for children with special educational needs. We feel that learning support forms a natural sub-section of a wider S.E.N. policy. It is from this perspective that we draw our rationale for the 'merging' of our Learning Support and Special needs policies.

We trust that our policy review will enable us to:

- Outline our whole school approach to teaching and learning in relation to pupils with special educational needs.

- Outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to pupils with S.E.N.

- Provide guidance for the enrolment of children with S.E.N. in our school.

- Assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child in our school.

- Enable pupils with S.E.N. to share with their peers as complete and educational experience as is possible.

- Continue to develop communication structures for the involvement of parents of pupils with S.E.N.

- Ensure that our policy complies with recent and current legislation and D.E.S. circulars.

## **School Mission Statement.**

S.S. Peter & Paul's C.B.S. is a Catholic school committed to the mission of nurturing the whole child – Spirit, mind and body. It seeks to welcome and accommodate the beliefs and customs of children of other faiths and cultures.

The staff of the school aims to ensure that the boys graduate from the school with a healthy sense of confidence and a willingness to face the future with self discipline and a deep respect for themselves, others and the environment.

Parents are acknowledged as their children's primary educators and, as such, are encouraged and facilitated to work together with teachers for the benefit of their children

Each pupil is encouraged to develop all his talents – academic, creative, spiritual and physical. The school endeavours to value all children equally in accordance with the values of the Gospel.

## **Aims of Learning Support and Resource Teaching in our School:**

The principal aim of learning support is 'to optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in accordance with their level of ability in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.' (L.S. guidelines p15).

Subsidiary aims include:

- To enable these pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their own class level in accordance with their own ability.
- To develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in these pupils.
- To enable these pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners.
- To provide supplementary teaching and additional support in English and Maths.
- To involve parents in supporting their children learning through effective parent-support programmes.
- To promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of the whole school policy on learning support for these pupils.
- To establish early intervention programmes and other programmes designed to enhance learning and to prevent/reduce difficulties in learning.
- To ensure that no pupil be harassed or bullied on the basis of a disability.

Effective Learning Support is based on the following principles:

- Effective whole-school policies and parental involvement.
- Prevention of failure.
- Provision of intensive early intervention.
- Early identification of pupils with significant difficulties in learning.
- Direction of resources towards pupils with greatest needs.

### **Staff Roles and Responsibilities:**

We believe that the effective implementation of our school policy on special needs and learning support services is a collaborative responsibility shared by all the different partners:

- Board of Management
- Principal
- Parent
- Child
- Class Teacher
- Learning Support Teacher
- Resource Teacher
- Resource Teacher for Travellers
- Language Support Teacher

S.N.A.  
Home – School Community Liaison Co-ordinator  
Posts of Responsibility (re. SEN).

### **Role of Board of Management:**

- To oversee the development, implementation and review of school policy on learning support and special educational needs.
- To ensure that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for learning support/resource teacher.
- To provide secure facilities for storage of records relating to pupils in receipt of special needs and learning support services.

### **Role of Principal**

- The principal teacher has overall responsibility for the school's learning support programme and for the operation of services for children with special educational needs.
- Work with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan on learning support and special needs.
- Monitor the implementation of the school plan on learning support and special needs on an ongoing basis
- Monitor the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with very low achievement.
- Oversee the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and/or learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need.
- Keep teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed in initiating referrals.
- Help teachers increase their knowledge and skills in the area of learning support/resource teaching.
- Assume direct responsibility for co-ordinating learning support and special needs services.

### **Role of Parents:**

- Parents, through their unique knowledge of their own child, have much to contribute to their child's learning. In our school we recognise and appreciate the positive influence which the involvement and participation of parents can have on children's learning and overall progress.
- Collectively, the active involvement of the community of parents in school life has been shown to enhance the effectiveness of the school as a whole.
- Collaboration and sharing of relevant information between teachers and parents have been shown to be of critical importance, particularly in

situations where the child requires support in his learning.

**Role of Child:**

The involvement of pupils as appropriate, in the development implementation and review of their own learning programmes is an important principle underlying effective supplementary teaching.

**Role of the Class Teacher:**

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching.

In supporting the development and implementation of the school plan on Learning Support and Special Needs, the class teacher should:

Implement teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all pupils, and, to the greatest extent possible, prevent the emergence of learning difficulties.

Implement the school policy on screening and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in English and in Mathematics by administering and scoring appropriate screening measures. (e.g. Drumcondra English/Drumcondra Maths).

For each pupil who is in receipt of Learning Support or Resource teaching, collaborate with the Learning Support/Resource teacher in the development of an Individual Profile and Learning Programme(I.P.L.P) or and Individual Educational Plan (I.E.P.) as appropriate.

For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, adjust the classroom programme in line with agreed learning targets and activities.

Differentiate the class curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of all pupils within the class.

A key role of effective supplementary teaching is a very high level of consultation and co-operation between class teacher and learning support/resource teacher.

**Role of the Learning Support Teacher. (Ref. L.S. Guidelines 2000).**

The main focus of the learning support teacher's work is the provision of supplementary teaching to pupils in the learning support room and/or in class support.

Activities of the Learning Support Teacher should also include:

Assisting in the implementation of a broad range of whole-school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to prevent learning

- difficulties;
- Development of an Individual Profile and Learning Programme for each pupils who is selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with class teachers and parents;
- Maintaining a weekly planning and progress record or equivalent for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of learning support;
- Delivering intensive early intervention programmes and providing supplementary teaching in English and/or Mathematics to pupils in the junior section of the school (senior infants to second class). (Mrs. Kearney).
- Providing supplementary teaching in English and/ or mathematics to pupils in senior section of the school (third to sixth classes) who experience low achievement and/or learning difficulties. (Mrs. Condon and Mr. Ryan).
- Co-ordinating the implementation of whole-school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, in line with the selection criteria specified in the school plan and input from the pupil's class teacher and parents;
- Contributing to the development of policy on learning support at the whole-school level.
- Providing advice to class teachers in such areas as individual pupil assessment and programme planning, as well as approaches to language development, reading, writing and mathematics for pupils experiencing learning difficulties;
- Contributing at the school level to decision-making regarding the purchase of learning support resource books and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms and in the learning support teachers room;
- Maintaining a list of pupils who are receiving learning support.

### **Role of the Resource Teacher (Ref. Circ. Sp. Ed. 08/02)**

A resource teacher assists the school in providing support for children with special educational needs arising from a disability by:

- Assessing and recording the child's needs and progress;
- Setting specific, time-related targets for each child and agreeing these with the class teacher and principal (IEP);
- Direct teaching of the children, either in a separate room or within the mainstream classroom;
- Providing advice to class teacher in such areas as individual pupil assessment and programme planning, as well as approaches to language development, reading, writing, and mathematics for pupils experiencing difficulties, use of textbooks, differentiation of the curriculum, teaching strategies, use of information technology and a range of other related matters.
- Ongoing meetings with parents of each pupil who is in receipt of resource teaching to discuss targets and ways in which attainment of the targets can be supported at home. This may necessitate being accompanied

at meetings by the class teacher and/or principal.  
Meeting with parents of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching at the end of each term to review pupil's attainment of agreed targets and to discuss the next instructional term and to revise the pupil's individual profile and learning programme.  
Liaising with outside agencies and meeting with other relevant professionals pertinent to the children in their care e.g. psychologist and speech and language therapist.

**Role of the Resource Teacher for Travellers** (c.f. Appendix 1).

**Role of the SNA (Ref. Circ. Sp. Ed. 07/02 Appendix 1.)**

The duties of the SNA are assigned by the Principal Teacher in accordance with circular 10/76.

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

Preparation and tidying up of classroom(s) in which the pupil(s) with special needs is/are being taught.  
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 pupils with particular difficulties e.g. helping physically disabled pupils with typing or writing.  
Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene.  
Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks and similar activities.  
Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods.  
Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom.  
General assistance to the class 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. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class).  
Where an SNA has been appointed to assist a school in catering for a specific pupil, duties should be modified to support the particular needs of the pupil concerned.

**Role of Home/School Community Liaison Co-ordinator.** (c.f. Appendix 2)

**Role of S.E.N. Co-ordinator – Catherine Senior.**

In consultation with the principal, class teachers and parents –

Responsibility for the bureaucratic aspects of the application procedure for pupils with SEN.  
Consulting with colleagues in identifying pupils who may have learning difficulties of a significant nature.  
Liaising with outside agencies/support services in relation to further assessment procedures.  
Supporting staff and providing all the relevant information on various aspects of a pupil's disability.  
Maintaining the school records of pupils with SEN since 1997.  
Assisting the principal with a secure storage of previous assessments.  
Collating information from primary records for pupil transfer to secondary school.  
Assisting the principal in regular review meetings with the schools S.N.A. staff.

## **Guidelines for L.S./R.T.**

### **(a) Access to our school.**

Equality of access is the key value that determines the enrolment of children in our school. No child is refused admission for reasons of ethnicity, special educational needs, disability, language, gender, traveller status, asylum-seeker/refugee status, religious, political beliefs and values, family or social circumstances.

All children will have equality of access to participate as fully as possible in school instruction, sports, school excursions and extra-curricular activities where resources allow. Activities may be adapted to suit individual needs and should be appropriate to the child's ability and age. Children with particular special needs will be assisted in activities by their Special Needs Assistants.

Our school enrolment policy supports inclusion with reference to the enrolment of children with special needs (whether physical, physiological, educational, behavioural, emotional, social or medical) provided that supports/resources requested by the B.O.M. are put in place by the D.E.S. prior to the enrolment of the child. Children with special needs will be resourced in accordance with the level of resources provided by the D.E.S. to the B.O.M.

The Board of Management may deem it necessary to defer enrolment of a particular child pending the receipt of medical/psychological/educational reports and provision of resources by DES to meet the needs of the child. Where reports are not available, the B.O.M. may request that a child be assessed to assist the school in establishing the educational and training needs of the child relevant to his/her disability or special needs.

### **(b) The role of Learning Support/Resource Teaching in our school:**

We believe that the child with Special Educational Needs is a valued pupil in our school who deserves the very best educational opportunities that we can provide. In order to provide an education appropriate to the child's needs, the B.O.M. will require full access to all documentation relevant to the child's ability.

We believe that there should be flexibility in the provision for children with S.E.N. We believe in providing a continuum of support in accordance with the needs of the child. Support may range from in-class support in a mainstream setting to more intensive support in a non-mainstream setting.

We believe that the most effective support for children comes from collaboration and consultation with all the partners in the educational process both inside and outside the school. We believe that parents are our primary partners and welcome their involvement and support.

We in Ss. Peter & Paul's Primary School are committed to working as a team to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum to each and every child in our care.

## **Internal Provision:**

Strategies for Preventing Learning Difficulties:

Current best practice in our school regarding strategies for preventing Learning difficulties include the following whole –school procedures:

Before children begin Junior Infants our Home-School Liaison Co-ordinator works with parents and toddlers on a number of pre-school initiatives including:

Home visit

Pre-school packs (crayons, nursery rhymes, cut + stick activities, jigsaws etc.)

Pre-school parent/teacher meetings.

When children start their formal schooling, the preventative initiatives are extended by our H.S.L. Co-ordinator to include:-

Meeting with new parents/parents in general.

Talks for parents by relevant professionals e.g. speech and language therapist, nutritionist etc.

Homework Club

Home visits.

Other whole school strategies for preventing learning difficulties include:

Development of agreed approaches to language development and to teaching other aspects of English (i.e. Structured Language Programme) and continuity from class to class. In our language policy we have agreed to place major emphasis on oral language.

Shared Reading programme begins in Junior Infants and is implemented

in every class up to 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Informal early screening and ongoing structured observation and assessment of the language, literacy and numeracy skills of pupils in the Infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties.

Strategies for Implementing Early Intervention Programmes:

Current Practice:

In our school the principle of early intervention underpins our policy on learning support.

Early intervention begins in Infants.

We work on a 2-instructional term year and intervention is balanced between a withdrawal group basis and in-class support.

### **Early Intervention Programmes.**

Implementation of intensive early intervention programmes in the early primary classes as an effective response to meeting the needs of children with low achievement. These programmes will:

Be set within a specific time frame (term)

Will be based on a shared expectation of success by everyone involved

Involve small group teaching, one-to-one or intervention in the classroom.

Include a strong focus on oral language and laying the foundation for meaningful reading

Place huge emphasis on Phonemic Awareness

Engage the pupils in frequent supervised oral and silent reading of texts at appropriate levels of difficulty and monitor their comprehension and teach strategies for comprehension

Stress the interconnected nature of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Focus on language development in the area of mathematics and the development of mathematical procedures and concepts.

### **Procedures and Criteria for Identifying and Selecting Pupils for Supplementary Teaching.**

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### **SCREENING.**

Current Practice:

In selecting pupils for diagnostic assessment and supplementary teaching, priority is given to those students who achieve scores that are at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile on nationally standardised tests of achievement in English

reading and/or Mathematics.

The screening tests we use are:

M.I.S.T. (Middle Infants Screening Test) (Senior Infants Term 2)

Drumcondra Primary Reading Test (Summer, 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Class).

Schonell Spelling Test (Nov., 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Class)

Drumcondra Maths (Summer, 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class).

N.R.I.T. (2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> – November)

Young Group Reading Test (1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup>, November).

## **DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT.**

Current Practice:

Diagnostic Assessment is the responsibility of the Learning Support Teachers in our school.

Order of children to receive Learning Support/Resource Teaching based on assessment:

Children with psychological assessments with recommendations for resource teaching. (Low incidence)

Children performing at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile in standardised tests of achievement in English (Drumcondra).

Senior Infants – early intervention programmes for low achievers in English based on class teacher's observations and recommendations. Results of M.I.S.T. used in Senior Infants (Term2).

Children performing at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile in standardised tests of achievement in Mathematics. (Drumcondra)

The school may exercise limited flexibility in the deployment of the L.S. teacher provided that the needs of the pupils who achieve scores at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile have been met. (e.g. children who are continually performing under the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile in standardised tests.)

### **Placement of pupils for Learning Support/Resource Teaching.**

As we attempt to embrace the 'staged approach' as proposed by D.E.S. Circular 23/04, we have in the school year 2008/2009 adopted the S.E.T. model (Special Education Teacher) to S.E.N. In effect this has meant that a number of our support teachers have had a mixed case-load of learning-support and resource teaching.

### **Procedures for referring pupils to Outside Agencies (e.g. Speech and Language therapist, N.E.P.S. etc.).**

Current Practice:

This procedure includes discussion with parents and teachers. Permission from parents is always sought and signed up before any referral is made. It is part of the duties of Assistant Principal Post 3 to “arrange psychological assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs ...”

### **Procedures for Provision of Supplementary Teaching by the Learning Support Teacher and Resource Teacher.**

Programme Planning, Implementation and Review.

Current practice:

In our school, the I.P.L.P. is drawn up by the L.S. teacher following consultation with class teacher and parent. The resource teacher draws up an IEP for each child in his/her case load following similar consultation.

Consultation with class teacher is carried out on an informal basis in a variety of settings. Class teacher also fills out check-list for L.S. Teacher. Parent is invited to meet with L.S. teacher before supplementary teaching begins and again before L.S. is discontinued. These meetings are in addition to other parent/teacher meetings.

### **Procedures for continuing/discontinuing Pupils in receipt of Supplementary teaching.**

Current Practice:

Progress of each pupil in receipt of L.S. is evaluated at the end of each instructional term, and following consultation with pupil's class teacher and parents, a decision is taken about the level of support that can be provided by the L.S. teacher in the future.

### **Approach to Involving Parents.**

Current Practice:

In our school we value our parents as equal partners sharing in the role of educating their children. We encourage parents to get involved as much as possible in supporting the work of the school.

As previously outlined the process of involving parents begins through the work of our Home-School Liaison Co-ordinator, Mrs. Browne even before our children begin their formal schooling.

As the children progress through the school, parents are encouraged to become involved in many ways; shared reading, homework folders/diaries, arts and crafts, maths games, parenting programmes, school activities etc.

### **Transfer to Second Level.**

Current Practice:

The relevant support team and Mrs. Browne meet with the support teacher of the local second level schools to try to ensure smooth transition of children from first to second level.

### **Bullying and Harassment.**

Current Practice:

All reported incidents of bullying and harassment are taken very seriously and dealt with in a sensitive manner. Our Principal ensures that the appropriate sanctions are put in place against bullying.

It is necessary for our S.E.N. policy to state clearly that no pupil should be harassed or bullied on the basis of disability.

### **Procedures for the provision of resources for Learning Support.**

Current Practice:

Learning Support resources are kept in the Learning Support/Resource rooms. Class teachers can access these resources at their discretion.

### **Time Tabling for Support Teaching.**

Current practice means that support teachers do their best to ensure that children in receipt of support teaching are time-tabled to minimise disruption for class teachers. This is not always possible, particularly where class teacher has contact with a number of support teachers. If children are being withdrawn for learning support, every effort is made to ensure that children do not always miss out on the same curricular area.

### **Work schedule of the Learning Support Teacher/Resource Teacher.**

Current Practice:

Almost all of the L.S./Resource Teacher's time is time-tabled for support teaching. However, it is generally accepted that the support teacher must also allocate time to non-teaching activities including overseeing the early intervention and prevention programmes, conducting diagnostic assessment, maintaining and receiving pupil records, consulting with parents and teachers and consulting with outside agencies (e.g. N.E.P.S., Speech and Language Therapists etc.).

It is understood that the Support teacher will need scheduled time both at the beginning and end of the instructional term(s) to allow for programme evaluation, diagnostic work etc.

### **Professional Development of Staff.**

Current Practice:

The Principal and B.O.M. are very supportive of the professional development of staff in respect of making appropriate provision for pupils with special learning needs.

## **Appendix 1.**

### **Education of Traveller Children.**

The B.O.M. will support the teachers in the following aims.

- To enable these pupils to participate in the curriculum to the fullest of their potential.
- To develop self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning.
- To provide supplementary teaching and additional support in English and Maths.
- To prepare and implement individual work programmes where necessary for students.
- To promote collaboration among teachers with regard to policies on learning support for these pupils.

To establish early intervention programmes designed to enhance learning and to prevent/reduce difficulties in learning.

#### **Role of the Resource Teacher.**

The role of the resource teacher is to support and optimise teaching and learning opportunities for Traveller children with identified supplementary teaching needs.

- The development of individual profile and learning programme for each child selected for supplementary teaching.
- Setting time-specific targets for each child.
- Maintaining a record of progress.

- Providing direct teaching in English and Maths.
- Review learning targets fortnightly and at the end of teach term  
Providing advice and supplementary materials to class teachers.

**Programmes:**

**Basic Skills.** Look Listen and Think, Middle and Upper Levels Prim-Ed,  
Let's Look LDA

**Phonics:** Basic Phonic Programmes e.g. Noel Moloney's Phonic Programmes  
M.I.C.

P.A.T. – Phonological Awareness training – Jo Wilson  
Look, Listen and Learn – Phonics Activity Book – CJ Fallon

**Phonological Awareness:**

Sound Linkage – Peter Hatcher  
Sounds Abound – Catts and Williamson  
Rhyme World – Reason, Wilson and Huxford  
Various nursery rhymes and sets of rhyme

cards.

**Reading:**

Class Readers  
Wellington Square Reading Programme

Nelson

Flying Boot Reading Programme Nelson  
Read On Reading Programme Stanley

Thornes

Language Experience Approach  
Environmental vocabulary and words for

living.

**Assessment Tests:**

Aston Index  
Get Reading Right Jackson  
Schonell Graded Word Reading Scale  
Rain Sentence Test  
Diagnostic Reading Programme Checklist  
Early Literacy and Numeracy Checklist  
The Primary Basic Skills profile  
Projects  
Curriculum Profiles  
Teacher – designed tasks & tests  
Portfolio assessments

**Parental Role.**

Parents will be encouraged and facilitated to become actively involved in their children's education by:

- Arrange Parent/Teacher meetings
- Use of Homework Journal to communicate information of child's progress to parents

- Invitation to parents to participate in relevant school based courses organised by the H.S.C.C. in e.g. Maths, English etc.

Encourage parents to ensure children attend school.