**Special Education Needs Policy**

**Introduction**

Ballintemple National School is a co-educational, mainstream, primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cork. The purpose of this SEN policy is to put a clear structure on the provision of special education within the school and to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and others interested in the area of Special Education. This document has been prepared in compliance with the Education Act 1998.

The school currently (school year 2018-2019) has the following provisions to cater for children with Special Education Needs:

1. The SEN team comprises four full time teachers who provide support in the areas of Literacy, Numeracy

 and Emotional and Behavioural support when needed.

2. Two Special Needs Assistants (SNA).

**Vision and Aims**

**Vision:**

We in Ballintemple N.S. strive to provide a holistic education for all children attending the school. We aspire to help pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) within an inclusive, whole school framework which emphasises effective teaching and learning for all, fosters good collaboration and engagement between schools parents/ guardians and pupils, and helps all pupils achieve their full potential

**Aims:**

* To outline our ‘whole school policy’ in relation to teaching and learning for pupils with SEN.
* To clarify procedures and practices to be followed in relation to the teaching of pupils with SEN
* To put in place practical communication structures for the involvement of parents of pupils (attending either the Resource Teacher or the Special Education Teacher.) in receipt of SEN provision.

**Inclusion**

In Ballintemple N.S, every effort is made to help every child fully participate in the school curriculum in a meaningful way. The school promotes

* A positive ethos and learning environment whereby all pupils, including those with special educational needs, feel welcome and experience a sense of community and belonging.
* An emphasis on promoting pupils’ participation and active engagement in their learning and in the life of the school.
* A commitment to developing pupils’ academic, social, emotional and independent living skills
* A focus on high aspirations and on improving outcomes for all pupils.

Differentiation within each area of the curriculum is provided thus ensuring that children with special education needs access the curriculum, both academic and social, at their own level.

Some of the strategies employed by the class teachers to support inclusion are:

* Varying the level, structure, mode of instruction and pace of lessons to meet individual needs.
* Adapting lessons to take account of pupils interests.
* Matching tasks to pupil’s abilities and needs.
* Adapting and utilising resources including the use of technology.
* Aspiring towards suitably challenging learning outcomes and assessing accordingly.
* Flexible use of S.N.A.s within classroom.
* Initiating and maintaining vibrant home / school communications.
* Regular communication with SEN team.

**Enrolment of children with Specific Education Needs.**

Parents of children with specific needs are required to inform the school at least one year in advance of commencement in school of the child’s specific needs. This will allow the parents and school plan to have all the necessary supports in place prior to the child starting school.

The Principal will also request a copy of the child’s medical and/or psychological report or where such a report is not available will request that the child be assessed immediately. The purpose of this assessment report is to assist the school in establishing the educational and training needs of the child relevant to his/her disability or special needs and to profile the support services required.

Following receipt of the report, the Board will assess how the school can meet the needs specified in the report. Where the Board deems that further resources are required, it will, prior to enrolment, request the Department of Education and Skills to provide the required resources to meet the needs of the child as outlined in the psychological and/or medical report. These resources may include for example, access to or the provision of any or a combination of the following: visiting teacher service, resource teacher for special needs, special needs assistant, specialized equipment or furniture etc. The Principal will meet with the child’s parents to discuss the child’s needs and the schools ability to meeting those needs. Where necessary a full case conference / meeting involving all parties will be held-parents, Principal, resource teacher, learning support teacher, psychologist etc as appropriate.

It may be necessary for the Board of Management to defer enrolment of a particular child pending:

* the receipt of an assessment report (psychological, medical, occupational therapy etc)
* the provision of appropriate resources by the Department of Education & Skills to meet the child’s needs as specified in the above report(s).

**Exceptional Circumstances**

The school reserves the right to refuse enrolment to a pupil in exceptional cases. Such an exceptional case could arise where either:

1. The pupil has special needs such that, even with additional resources available from the Department of Education and Skills, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the pupil with an appropriate education.
2. In the opinion of the Board of Management, the pupil poses an unacceptable risk to other pupils, to school staff or to school property.

**Specific Objectives of Support Teaching**

Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

 1. Facilitate pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level.

 2. Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning.

 3. Enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners within their own

 ability.

 4. Involve parents in supporting their children’s learning.

 5. Ensure collaboration between the class teacher and the SEN team.

**Guiding Principles**

The school recognises that effective learning programmes are based on the following principles:

1. Effective whole-school policies.

2. Provision of intensive early intervention.

3. Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need.

**Prevention Strategies**

As a means of preventing the occurrence of learning difficulties as far as possible, the following strategies are being implemented:

1. The development and implementation of agreed ‘whole school approaches’ to languages development.
2. The development and implementation of agreed ‘whole school approaches, to the teaching of aspects of Maths, e.g. our whole-school approach to the language of addition, subtraction, use of concrete materials etc.
3. Promotion of parental understanding and involvement through their attendance at an induction meeting for the parents of incoming Junior Infants, the provision of the Tips for Parents booklet, the arrangement of formal and informal Parent-Teacher Meetings.

Parents will be required to complete a pupil information profile as part of the enrolment procedure- this will identify children who have received any speech and language/ OT and other supports prior to commencing their schooling at Ballintemple N.S. Parental concerns will also be recorded at this stage.

1. Implementation of a Literacy Intervention Programme beginning in Junior Infants and continuing in Senior Infants and First Class.
2. Classes 2nd-6th will engage in the CAPER (Children and parents enjoying reading) reading initiative
3. Class-based *early* intervention by the SEN team.
4. Ongoing observation and assessment of pupils by the Class Teacher

**Identification of Educational Needs through the Continuum of Support Process**

1. The principle of early intervention applies, therefore pupils from Junior Infants to Second Class are given priority in the allocation of school support

2. In Junior Infants pupils are screened using teacher and support teacher observation. A phonological awareness test in addition to teacher designed literacy tests will be administered.

3. From Senior Infants upwards, all pupils are screened annually, using appropriate standardised tests

( Drumcondra tests in Reading and Mathematics in classes 1st - 6th inc’)

4. If concerns arise about a pupil within the class, a Classroom Support plan runs for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.

5. If concerns persist, a School Support plan is devised and will detail suitable teaching approaches, including team teaching, small group or individual tuition. This will run for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.

6. Some pupils will be supported using a School Support Plus plan.

7. Priority for School Support is given to those pupils who perform at or below the 20th Percentile, in numeracy or literacy excluding in the main pupils who have already been allocated hours.

8. Parents and pupils will be consulted and involved through all stages of the Support plans. Written or verbal consent will be sought before any intervention will be undertaken. When discussing the proposed intervention with the child, the matter will be dealt with in a positive and sensitive manner.

**Provision of Supplementary Teaching**

1. The staged approach to pupil support will form the first support initiative in every class. The primary

 role of the SEN team is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils who

 have already received in class differentiated Stage 1, Classroom Support.

2. The school-year will be divided into 3 Instructional Terms.

3. The maximum case load at any one time shall be 30 pupils.

4. A system of withdrawal and/or in-class support will operate in response to the needs of the individual

 pupil.

5. One- to- one teaching may be provided where small group teaching has not been effective.

6. Classes will be intensive in terms of frequency.

7. The Class Teacher and a member of the SEN team will meet to devise a Group Education Plan (IPLP),

 in consultation with the Principal and parents. The pupils involved can also contribute to setting their

 own short-term targets.

8. The SEN team will maintain the following documentation in individualised files:

 1. Student Support File

 2. Individual Profile and Learning programme

 3. Short term planning and programme record

 4. Samples of written work

 5. Test result records

**Student Support File**

This file to be instigated at the initial Classroom Support stage of the continuum and **may** contain a:

1. General plan for support
2. Behavioural plan or contract
3. Individual profile and learning programme
4. Individual IEP or Personalised pupil plan

The Student Support File to accompany pupil through his/her school years.

**Individual Education Plan / Group Education Plan (School Support Plus)**

The Individual Education Plan / Group Education Plan will be in accordance with the format as advised in the Learning Support Guidelines, issued by the DES in 2000.

The plan will address the pupil's full range of needs and will include:

1. Pupil details - name, address, date of birth, contact details, PPS number, etc
2. Assessment Results
3. Other relevant information, e.g. reports from other agencies
4. Learning strengths and attainments
5. Priority Learning Needs
6. Learning Targets
7. Class-based learning activities
8. Supplementary support activities to include ICT ( Information and Communication Technology)
9. Home Support Activities

Each plan will be monitored through teacher observation; the keeping of planning and progress records and through the pupil’s own feedback and feedback from parents.

A detailed review will take place at the end of each Instructional Term. The SEN team and/or the Class Teacher will meet the parents to discuss the child’s progress in the light of the review.

**Timetabling**

1. The provision of all School Support is in addition to the regular class teaching in English and Maths.
2. Every effort is made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curricular area each time they attend additional Support. A flexible approach to timetabling is adopted by the Class Teacher.
3. The provision of additional support may include withdrawal of pupils from their classroom and/or in-class tuition.
4. In class support, if appropriate, will be jointly designed and monitored by the Class Teacher and the SEN team.

**Provision of Resources**

1. Resources provided include a variety of structured reading schemes, library books, concrete materials to support literacy and numeracy, computer software etc.
2. A variety of testing materials - include standardised, diagnostic, screening, reading experience, reading attainment, phonological awareness and Maths attainment tests.
3. Following consultation between the SEN team, Principal and Class Teacher, funding for materials may be provided by the Parents' Association / Board of Management / DES grants.
4. Support resources will primarily be used in the learning Support Room. These resources may be made available to Class Teachers following consultation with the SEN.

**Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching**

1. In general, children should not stay for more than 2 years in Supplementary Teaching, unless they are still at or below the 20th Percentile. If more than 2 years of learning support is deemed necessary, a psychological assessment may be considered in line with the Continuum of Support Process. This will screen for specific learning difficulties such as Dyslexia etc.
2. Following the end of an Instructional Term Review, as detailed above, a decision is made to continue/discontinue the provision of Supplementary Teaching.
3. The decision making process will involve consultation between the Class Teacher, the Special Education Teacher, and the pupil’s parents and the pupil. An account will also be taken of the overall Learning Support demands in the school.

The criteria on which the decision will be made include:

(a) A consideration as to whether the pupil has achieved some/all of the learning targets.

(b) A consideration as to whether the pupil will be able to cope independently/semi independently in

 the classroom learning context.

(c) Recommendations listed in the child’s Psychological or O.T. report

**Referral to out of School Agencies**

1. The SEN team co-ordinates the referral of pupils to outside agencies, e.g. Educational Psychologist.
2. The Principal and/or Special Education Teacher and/or Class Teacher meet with the parents to discuss the need for the referral and to seek consent.
3. The Class Teacher completes the necessary referral form in consultation with the appropriate school personnel.
4. The external professional visits the school to meet with the pupil, parents, Principal, Class Teacher and the Learning Support Teacher as appropriate, and the assessment is conducted.
5. This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed.

**Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

SEN Support is a collaborative responsibility shared by all partners in the learning experiences. It is important that all partners contribute in the planning and implementation of our school SEN plan.

***Board of Management***

The role of the Board of Management is to:

1. Oversee the development, implementation and review of the provision of Special Educational Needs Support in the school.
2. Ensure adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the SEN team.
3. Provide a secure facility for storage or records in relation to pupils in receipt of SEN Support.
4. Budget for ongoing support for Professional Development in SEN provision for all staff members.

***Principal***

The role of the Principal is to:

1. Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the inclusive, whole school’s policy on SEN in co-operation with the Board of Management, teachers, parents and children
2. Work with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan on SEN to ensure continuity of provision for all pupils.
3. Monitor the implementation of the school SEN plan on an ongoing basis.
4. Monitor the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with lowest levels of achievement.
5. Assume direct responsibility for co-ordination of support in the context of Special Needs Services.
6. Oversee the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identity pupils with very low achievement and learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need.
7. Keep teachers informed about the external assessment service that are available and the procedure to be followed in initiating referral.
8. Facilitate continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to education of pupils with special educational needs and ensure all school staff (all teachers and special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area.

***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, the class teacher should:

1. Implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of pupils with special educational needs and adapt their teaching approaches for some pupils whose individual progress, application, motivation, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers are causes for concern.(adjust the classroom programmes in line with the agreed learning targets and activities)
2. Implement the school policies on screening and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in English and Maths by co-operating and assisting with the administration and scoring of appropriate screening measures.
3. A Classroom Support Plan must be implemented for those pupils who do not respond appropriately to the differentiated programme. This is informed by teacher observation, parental and SEN consultation(See Appendix 1 – Continuum of Support Process)
4. For each pupil who is in receipt of School Support (See Appendix 1 – Continuum of Support Process) to collaborate with the SEN team in the development of an individual profile and learning programme by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve these targets.
5. Weekly plan of work in English and Maths to be provided to the SEN team in advance.

***General approaches and teaching methods***

With regard to teaching pupils with low achievement, the following general approaches and methods are recommended:

1. Such children should be prioritised when accessing information from previous class teacher
2. Priority when establishing parental contact
3. Co- operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms
4. Modify presentation and questioning techniques to maximise the involvement of pupils with low achievement in class activities
5. Placing emphasis on oral language development across the curriculum
6. Providing pupils with extra tutoring in the key basic skills in literacy and numeracy
7. Setting learning targets in consultation with SEN team, parents and child, which are relevant, meaningful, realistic and which relate to the strengths and interests of the child and are at an appropriate level.
8. Providing learning activities and material which are suitably challenging but which also ensure success and progress
9. Carrying out error analyses of a pupil’s work to pinpoint specific areas of difficulty
10. Setting up ‘buddy systems’ in class (high achievers collaboratively working with low achievers, e.g. peer tutoring / paired reading(heterogeneous group work)
11. Interventions to promote social and emotional competence
12. Embedding ICT in teaching learning and assessment
13. Applying assessments and tests which offer challenge and opportunities for success to children of all levels of achievement

A key role of successful SEN Support is a very high level of consultation and co-operation between the Class Teacher and the SEN Teacher. Central to this consultation is the development, implementation and review of Individual Profile and Learning Programmes.

***Special Education Team***

The role of the Special Education Team is to:

1. Develop an Individual Profile and Learning Programme and a Student Support File for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with the Class Teacher and parents.
2. Targets for pupils should be routinely assessed, recorded and used to review progress.
3. Plan and keep a progress record or equivalent for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of additional support.
4. Provide teaching in English, Maths or behavioural support to pupils in the school who experience difficulties, in accordance with the school’s selection criteria, in the appropriate setting for the child’s needs.

This may require

* 1. Direct teaching of the child, either in a separate room or within the mainstream class.
	2. Team or group teaching when the child concerned will derive benefit from it.
1. Contribute to the development of policy on Learning Support at whole school level.
2. Provide advice to the Class Teachers in such areas as individual pupils assessment and programme planning, as well as approaches to language development, reading, writing, mathematics and behavioural or emotional support for pupils experiencing difficulties.
3. Contribute at school level to decision making regarding the purchase of learning resource books and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms.
4. Perform a defined role in co-ordinating the provision of Special Needs and Learning Support services in the school.
5. Liaise with external agencies such as psychologists to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs.
6. Maintain a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and special education support.
7. Track the progress of pupils who have discontinued Learning Support.
8. Meet and advise parents, when necessary, accompanied by class teacher and SNA.

***Special Needs Assistant (S.N.A.)***

In general, the role of the S.N.A. is to:

1. Fully support the child at an academic, behavioural, emotional and social level both inside and outside the classroom.
2. Work in the best interest of the child under the direction of the Principal, class teacher and Special Education teacher.
3. Attend IEP meetings and assist in the compilation and implementation of the I.E.P (Individual Education Plan) for the child.

The Board of management will determine the full use of allocated hours outside of contact hours, as per the Department of Education directive.

***Parents***

The role of parents in supporting SEN provision for their children is vital to its success. Specifically, parents contribute through:

1. Regular communication with the Class Teacher and Learning Support Teacher.
2. Creating a home environment where literacy can thrive.
3. Fostering positive self esteem and attitudes about school and learning in the child.
4. Participation in shared reading programme.
5. Encouraging the child to visit library.
6. Developing the child’s oral language.
7. Developing the child’s social mathematics.

**Communication Strategies**

The operation of an effective communication system between all the parties involved in meeting the learning needs of the child is essential. The various strands of the system will include:

1. The classroom teacher communicating with the child’s parents early in the school year regarding the

 child’s needs - educational needs, social needs, behavioural needs etc.

2. Communication between Principal and/or Special Education Teacher and/or Class Teacher and parents

 following a low score on a screening test. This communication will be concerned with the seeking of

 approval for further diagnostic assessment and/or provision of supplementary teaching.

3. Regular weekly communication between the Special Education Teacher and the Class Teacher, with a

 view of supporting the child with their class-work and having a clear and agreed plan of action for the

 week ahead.

4. Regular communication between the Special Education Teacher and parents.

**Success Criteria**

The school wide implementation of this policy will result in enhancement of pupils learning in the following ways:

1. Improved standards of academic achievement with the pupil’s individual learning programme
2. The child takes responsibility for his learning, engages fully with the learning process and his social, emotional and behavioural competence is strengthened.
3. Enabling the discontinuation of the provision of Learning Support based on positive assessment results
4. Enhanced parental involvement in supporting their child’s learning needs
5. Increased opportunities for effective communication between school personnel in relation to pupil’s progress.

This revised policy was approved by the Board of Management at its June 2017 meeting.