

## **ST. GABRIELS PRIMARY SCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY**

The rationale for this policy is to provide pupils with an appropriate education in compliance with the Education Act (1998), the Education Welfare Act (2000), the Disability Bill (2002), the E.P.S.E.N. Act (2004) and current Department of Education and Skills circulars. The principle aim of all Special Education Teaching (SET) is to optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with special educational needs to experience success at school and to reach their potential in learning and social and emotional literacy. Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

- Identify children experiencing difficulties and provide additional support and or resources.
- Adapt the curriculum where necessary to meet the needs of children experiencing learning difficulties.
- Develop the self-esteem of each child
- Work closely with parents as collaborators in their child's education
- Enable the children attending SET to participate as much as possible in the full class curriculum
- Support the teaching and inclusion of children enrolled in the Autism Class to meet their full potential, integrating into the mainstream setting where appropriate.

### **Inclusion:**

We are fully committed to the principle of inclusion and the good practice which makes it possible.

In order to do this, we will use the 'Continuum of Support Process' to identify educational needs including academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. The initial tool used is the Department of Education and Skills, Guidelines for Primary Schools : Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream schools; learning environment checklist and teacher checklist. In planning support, the NCSE 'Planning Template' outlining the six point approach will be utilised.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

**Board of Management:** The Board has responsibility to oversee the implementation of the school policy on Special Education Needs and to ensure that adequate classroom accommodation, appropriate teaching resources and secure data storage facilities are provided for teachers.

**Principal:** The Principal has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school policy on Special Educational Needs. The Principal will endeavour to:

- Develop inclusive whole-school policies and monitor their implementation.
- Coordinate teachers' work to ensure continuity of provision of all pupils.
- Assign staff strategically to teaching roles, including special education roles.
- Ensure that whole school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, pupils and external professionals/ agencies.
- Ensure effective systems are implemented to identify pupils' needs and methodically monitor progress.

**Special Needs Co-ordinator:** The Special Needs Co-ordinator will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the day-to-day operation of the SEN policy
- Co-ordinating provision for children with special educational needs
- Supporting SETs with time-tabling.
- Supporting the drafting and reviewing of Classroom Support plans, School Support plans and School Support Plus plans (I.E.Ps) and Personal Pupil Plans.
- Supporting with the integration of children in the Autism Class into the mainstream classroom
- Organising the timetable for SETs
- Liaising with and advising fellow teachers and contributing to in-service training of staff
- Liaising with and advising SNAs with regard to supporting children with special needs
- Liaising with parents of children with special needs and advising on procedures for availing of SEN services
- Monitoring and evaluating SEN provision
- Facilitating planning for class teacher with SETs

- Supporting the implementation of a tracking system at a whole-school level to monitor the progress of children
- Keeping teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed for initial referrals
- Identifying and prioritising children for psychological assessment in consultation with Principal, class teachers and NEPS psychologist.
- Supporting the Principal in liaising with external agencies such as NEPS, SENO, CAMHS, Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT), Familybase SLT, NCSE and private therapists.
- Organising exemptions from the study of Irish for pupils for whom this is appropriate.
- Purchasing resources as required for children with specific needs as per professionals' recommendation in assessments.

Class Teacher: Effective teaching and learning is critically important for all pupils, and especially for those with special educational needs. Meaningful inclusion implies that all pupils are taught in stimulating and supportive classroom environments where they are respected and valued. Mainstream class teachers have primary responsibility for the education of all pupils in their classes. Accordingly, classroom teachers should ensure that they plan their lessons carefully to address the diverse needs within the classroom. This will include adapting their teaching approaches for some pupils whose individual progress, application, motivation, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers are causes for concern. This may require targeted interventions to develop relevant adaptive skills related to these needs. All mainstream class teachers will implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. These include:

- Co-operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms
- Collaborative problem-solving activities
- Varied group work
- Differentiation
- Interventions to promote social and emotional competence
- Embedding Information and communications technology (ICT) in teaching, learning and assessment

To cater for the range of learning needs in any class, mainstream class teachers will regularly need to differentiate their lessons. This can be achieved by:

- 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 pupils' abilities and needs
- Adapting and utilising resources, including the use of technology
- Aspiring towards suitably challenging learning outcomes and assessing accordingly
- Methodologies e.g. active learning, group tuition, individual teaching, and scaffolded instruction.
- Supporting the inclusion of children from the Autism Class in the mainstream classroom.

Special Educational Teachers (SET): Special education teachers should be familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and to meet a variety of needs. Teaching approaches will include a combination of team-teaching initiatives, co-operative teaching, early intervention and small group or individual support. Depending on the learning needs identified, a pupil with SEN may be supported at classroom level, additional teaching delivered in-class or withdrawal support models.

Some pupils with more complex and enduring needs may require specific methodologies, teaching approaches and/or learning activities. Such interventions should be based on careful identification of strengths and needs, including multi-disciplinary assessment when necessary.

The type of support offered depends on the child's individual needs and may include:

- curriculum support
- life and/or social skills training
- physical training/gross motor development/fine motor development
- speech training/communication and/or language development

- strategies to address behaviours of concern
- a combination of some/all of the above
- Specific ASD instruction and methodologies

Special Education Teachers, in consultation with class teachers, should plan their interventions carefully to address pupils' priority learning needs and to achieve the targets identified in the relevant continuum of support plan. Short-term planning should reflect the support plan targets and should break down the development of skills and content into small incremental steps to address each pupil's specific needs on a weekly basis. Outcomes for pupils should be routinely assessed, recorded and used to review progress. These outcomes should also be used to inform the targets for the next phase of intervention. SETs will consult with parents when developing and reviewing policies relating to the education of children with special educational needs.

Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Teacher: The HSCL Teacher's role includes arranging or facilitating meetings with parents of SEN pupils, assisting in the completion of assessment forms or making home visits with regard to SEN pupils, supporting parents appointments with outside agencies.

Special Needs Assistants: The Special Needs Assistants in St. Gabriel's are assigned to the school in order to facilitate the development of pupils with SEN. They are allocated as appropriate by the Principal. SNA's will support the implementation of the School Support Plus plan. Personal Pupil Plans are also drawn up with class teachers to assist SNAs in their role of supporting children with care needs.

Parents/Guardians: Good parental engagement is a critical factor in outcomes for pupils with special educational needs. Parental engagement is enhanced when parents are consulted in relation to their children's needs and strengths, on the supports and strategies being developed to support their children, and when they are involved in regular reviews of progress. The Continuum of Support process and use of the Student Support File provide valuable opportunities to engage with parents and to build a collaborative approach to identifying and responding to the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Parents/Guardians can support the work of the school by:

- Supervising, assisting with, showing interest in and signing homework.
- Reading and telling stories to their child/children.
- Listening to and giving supportive feedback on oral reading.
- Where their child is in receipt of supplementary teaching, implementing suggested home-based activities and discussing the outcomes with the child's teachers.
- Signing and returning consent forms to the school regarding withdrawal for support teaching.
- Talking positively about school and schoolwork.
- Keeping the class teacher/ SEN coordinator or Principal informed of any home factors, which may be affecting their child's progress.
- Participating in activities organised by the school that are designed to increase the involvement of parents in their children's learning.
- Helping children to develop their organisational skills.
- Helping children to look after school books or resources loaned to the children for use at home.
- Supporting programmes and initiatives implemented by the school.
- Attending Parent teacher meetings and meetings to review Continuum of Support documents
- Informing the school of any private assessments / HSE assessments carried out and providing the school with reports as necessary

### **Admission and Participation**

The school aims to meet the needs of any child whom the parent wishes to register at the school as long as a place is available and the admission criteria are fulfilled. The Education For Persons with Disabilities Act 2004 states that 'A child is entitled to attend the school which is most suited to his or her overall needs'. Parents are requested to notify the school of their child's special needs in advance of enrolment. In the best interest of the child, parents are requested to share records from previous schools and outside agencies. The Board of Management will request a copy of the child's medical, psychological or multi-disciplinary report.

No child will be refused admission solely on the grounds that s/he has SEN except where the provision required is incompatible with that available in our school. Parents of all children are required to consent to and comply with the School Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy. See Admissions Policy.

### **Whole School Strategies to Minimise Learning Difficulties**

Our strategies for preventing learning difficulties include:

1. Promotion of Literacy through Reading for Pleasure, Genre Writing, Station Teaching, Guided Reading and others outlined in our school Literacy plan.
2. Early Intervention. Screening tests are administered at the end of the Junior Infant school year, in order to identify children with difficulties and implement interventions as early as possible.
3. Developing Listening Skills: Promoting a classroom environment where children listen to others, do not interrupt the speaker and wait their turn. Approaches include Circle Time, listening games/activities, Listening to music, Participating in Talk boost.
4. The use of IT to teach literacy and encourage learning

### **Observation and Assessment:**

Initial assessment takes the form of observation and professional dialogue with colleagues. Observation tools used may include personal checklists, record sheets for children, shared observations, reading records and monitoring of school and homework. See Appendix for a list of the assessment tools used in our school.

### **Stages of SET Provision (The Continuum of Support)**

Primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in the class lies with the class teacher. Access to the school curriculum is achieved for most children by differentiation of class work by the class teacher. When a class teacher has concerns about a child's progress the class teacher consults with the SEN coordinator and provides interventions that are additional to and different from those provided as part of the school's usual differentiated curriculum

#### **Stage One, Classroom Support**

Class teachers initially discuss concerns with the child's parents. The triggers for this intervention could be:

- The child makes little or no progress even when teaching approaches are directed at an identified area of weakness
- The child shows signs of difficulty in developing literacy or numeracy skills resulting in poor attainment
- Persistent emotional or behavioural difficulties which do not respond to behaviour management techniques used by the school
- The child is presenting with sensory or physical difficulties
- The child has communication and/ or relationship difficulties

The class teacher completes an evaluation of the child, creates a support plan, informs the parents of its content and monitors the Record of Differentiated Support for at least one term. If the targets of the Classroom Support Plan are not being met the teacher informs the parents that their child's needs would be better served through moving to a School Support Plan.

#### **Stage Two, School Support**

In cases where the Record of Differentiated Support indicates that progress has not been made, or if the results of tests (Micra T, Sigma T, Junior Infant screening, Marie Clay, Running records) and teacher observation indicate this to be the case, intervention in the form of a SET will be accessed. Withdrawal may form part of this second stage. Class teachers will discuss their concerns with the child's parents and seek consent to move the child to School Support including learning support teaching. The parent response must be recorded on the log of actions.

The following selection criteria will apply:

- Children who have been recommended for resource support by an educational psychologist or health care professional.
- Children who meet the criteria for Maths Recovery or Reading Recovery/ Catch Up Literacy.
- Those children who have scored poorly on the Junior and Senior Infant Screening tests.

- 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class children who have scored at or below the 10th percentile in their most recent MICRA-T and/or SIGMA-T tests (this may vary depending on available resources)
- Availability of resources.

The action taken will be as follows:

- The class teacher and support teacher will differentiate the curriculum in specific areas with achievable targets to be implemented by the class teacher and support teacher.
- If there are others in the class with similar difficulties in one or more of the specific areas, then a group educational plan can be implemented.
- These programmes will be reviewed and updated every February.
- While every effort will be made to allow the SEN group/individual to remain included in class, there may be a need to work part of the programme in a SEN room with the support teacher or class teacher. This withdrawal will be time limited and for specific purposes only (e.g. Reading Recovery/ Maths Recovery/ Catch Up Literacy/Social and Emotional programmes, regulation breaks.)
- Where progress is such that the child is no longer giving cause for concern, the child will revert to the usual differentiated curriculum available to all children.

### Stage Three, School Support Plus

The support or class teacher may perform diagnostic tests at the beginning and/or end of the school year. These tests may include Running Records, Non Reading Intelligence test, Dyslexia Screening. If a child is still experiencing learning difficulties and performing below the tenth percentile despite school intervention the class teacher, SET and SEN coordinators, in consultation with the child's parents, may consider moving the child to School Support Plus and a referral for a psychological assessment or assessment by another outside agency may be sought. (see Education for Persons with Disability Act 2004 and The Department of Education Autism Good Practice, Guidance for Schools). The triggers for extra intervention could be that, despite previous supports the child:

- Continues to work at Primary Curriculum levels substantially below that of children of a similar age
- Makes little or no progress
- Continues to have literacy and numeracy difficulties
- Has emotional or behavioural difficulties which substantially and regularly interfere with the child's learning, or that of other children, despite a behaviour management programme and IEP
- Has sensory and/or physical needs, and requires additional specialist equipment or regular visits from an advisory service
- Has an ongoing communication or relationship difficulty that prevents social development, and act as a barrier to learning.
- Has a diagnosis of ASD and a recommendation that they attend an Autism Class.

If it is felt by the psychologist or other relevant professional that a child has care needs, a Special Needs Assistant may be applied for or access granted from existing SNA resources.

In circumstances where a recommendation is given to use specialised equipment, application will be made to the Department of Education for funding.

Based on professional reports, class based tests and Record of Differentiation the class teacher with the SET teacher, SNA (if assigned), parents and representatives of outside agencies (if necessary) formulate a School Support Plus Plan (traditionally, an Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.)). These School Support Plus Plans (SSPP) employ a small steps approach and feature significantly in SET provision. By breaking down the existing levels of attainment into finely graded targets, it is ensured that the child experiences success. This plan is based on templates provided in the NEPs documentation and Aladdin record keeping system. The strategies set out in the SSPP will, as far as possible, be implemented in the normal classroom setting. The management of the IEP strategies will be the responsibility of the class teacher, support teacher and the SEN coordinator. A February and June review should be conducted. Where progress is satisfactory, and where the child is consistently achieving targets over the stated time, a decision may be made to revert to a previous level on the Continuum of Support and parents are informed. Where progress is unsatisfactory, it may be decided that the child continues to receive additional supports.

Children in the Autism classroom will all have a School Support Plus Plan .

### **Exceptional Ability & Giftedness.**

'An able child is one that achieves or has the ability to achieve at a level significantly in advance of their peer group. This may be in all areas of the curriculum or in a limited range'. (Eyre, 1999). Children who are considered gifted may have been assessed by a psychologist and found to have a high level of intelligence (an IQ score of 130+, 98<sup>th</sup> Percentile). Giftedness is recognised as a 'disability' or special education condition in the Education Act (1998) and children may need access to support. In this case:

1. The class teacher is responsible for differentiation within the classroom, including acquisition and distribution of teaching resources for differentiation.
2. The SET team will be responsible for assessment, organisation of extension classes/ support lessons to challenge the pupil and these will be reflected in the child's School Support plan.
3. The SET team will be responsible for acquisition and distribution of information regarding referral and assessment by outside agencies
4. The Principal will liaise with parents, SETs and class teachers throughout the process.
5. Parents will be advised to contact DCU for programs available for talented youth.

### **English as a Second Language (ESL) Teaching**

The SEN team supports newcomer pupil's development of English language proficiency so that he/she can gradually gain access to the curriculum, ultimately achieving the same educational opportunities as English-speaking peers by:

- Working in collaboration with the class teacher to set relevant and achievable learning targets for each pupil through the continuum of support.
- Preparing the pupil to access mainstream learning, initially in part and later more fully.
- Helping the pupil to develop appropriate strategies and skills to support future formal education.

The responsibility of the support teacher is to deliver a programme of English language tuition, which is based on the primary curriculum. Class teachers have a responsibility to differentiate at class level and collaborate with the resource teacher. Assessment tools available include the Up and Away programme and the British Picture Vocabulary Scale.

### **Providing for Children with Social, Emotional or Behavioural Difficulties.**

St. Gabriel's School recognises that some children experience difficulties of a social, behavioural or emotional nature. The continuum of support is a central part of our behaviour management strategy. Planning for SEN will take into account teachers' and parents' concerns, along with recommendations from psychologists regarding children's social and emotional needs. If deemed necessary, such children may be withdrawn from class by SEN teachers to participate in one-to-one or group 'social' lessons. These lessons will be designed to help the child develop social skills. During these sessions, the SEN teacher may need to work on enhancing the child's self-esteem or developing communication skills, friendship skills and co-operation skills such as turn taking. The SET teacher, during these lessons, may wish/need to use a variety of methodologies such as Circle time, co-operative games, art and craft activities, cooking/baking, project work, computer activities, Mindfulness or regulation breaks. Participation in the School's Rainbow Programme or SCP may be recommended. Referrals may be recommended to outside support agencies e.g. ISPCC, Barnardos etc. Children may be referred for an Educational Psychological Assessment.

### **Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policy**

- The Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policy is in place for every child in St. Gabriel's.
- It is recognised that certain challenging behaviour problems are a result of specific conditions however all children must comply with the School Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies.
- Where challenging behaviour problems arise, efforts will be made to accommodate the child's needs and also to uphold the code of behaviour of the school.
- In the case of ongoing challenging behaviour, a behavioural contract or Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP) may be used. This contract or plan will be worked out in collaboration with parents, Class teacher/ SET, Principal and child and will be developed based on the individual needs of the child.
- Support from NEPs will be sought where appropriate and possible.

- Where ongoing or serious challenging behaviour arises which causes the child to be a danger to him/herself or others and/or prevents other children from learning or where the use of a behaviour contract has failed, further sanctions from the school's 'Code of Behaviour' shall be implemented

If a child is presenting with serious emotional, behavioural or social problems, the school may encourage parents to contact their GP /other agencies with a view to a clinical referral. Where parents refuses to cooperate in seeking support from outside agencies a Child Protection referral to Tusla will be considered by the Board of Management.

### **Assistive Technology**

If required, assistive technology will be sought and managed in accordance with Department of Education and Skills circular 0010/13, most significantly:

- The school's management authority will have responsibility for the maintenance, repair and insurance of this technology and will ensure the safe custody and careful handling of the equipment.
- Although this equipment is sanctioned for a specific child, the equipment is the property of the school and may be allocated to subsequent pupils with similar disabilities.
- Equipment purchased is kept in the school unless the class teacher/ SET informs the Board of Management that the equipment is essential for homework, and the Board may then sanction this.
- Upon transfer to another school, the SENO may allocate it to another school or oversee the transfer of the equipment from the primary to the post primary school.
- The class teacher, in collaboration with the Principal, will be responsible for the planning and monitoring of the effective use of Assistive Technology in the child's learning. Programmes of work, use of software etc. will form part of the child's IEP.
- Where a laptop/tablet is sanctioned, the child will also continue to use pencils/ pens and develop writing skills as per curriculum.

### **Management of data**

SEN data pertaining to children may be accessed only on a needs basis. Management of all data is consistent with the schools Data protection Policy and Data Protection legislation.

### **Irish Exemptions**

An exemption from the study of Irish may be granted only in accordance with Circular 0054/2022.

### **Homework**

The class teachers and the SET teachers will work in collaboration when assigning homework to children who receive supplementary teaching to ensure an appropriate quantity and level of work is set.

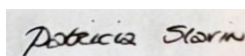
### **Other Relevant Policies**

All policies have a bearing on Special Educational Needs and in particular: Acceptable Use Policy, Administration of Medication, Admissions and Participation, Anti-Bullying, Child Safeguarding Statement, Code of Behaviour, Data protection, Health & Safety, Homework

### **Monitoring And Review**

The policy will be reviewed on a needs basis and at least within a four-year period.

### **Signature:**



Ms Patricia Slavin , Chairperson St. Gabriel's Board of Management

**Date:** 18/2/2025

## Appendix 1 - ASSESSMENT

The following assessments normally take place annually in the school:

	Name of test	Area/s assessed	Class	When	Administered by
1	St. Gabriel's Junior Infant Screening Test	Visual discrimination, hand- eye co-ordination, cutting skills, matching skills, letter recognition and sounds	Junior Infants	Late May/early June	Class teacher
2	Sound Linkage Phonological Awareness	Blending, segmenting, rhyme, sound deletion, transposition, spoonerisms	Junior Infants	May (one JI class per week)	Class teacher & 2 SEN teachers (Individual testing)
3	Number Knowledge Test	Gives a developmental level score for number	Jun and Sen Inf	May (one JI class per week)	Class teachers & 3 SEN teachers (Individual testing)
4	The Marie Clay Assessment	Standardised assessment testing: - Letter identification - Concepts about print - hearing and recording sounds - Writing vocabulary - Sight vocabulary	Senior Infants	May (one SI class per week)	Class teachers & 2 SEN teachers (Individual testing)
5	Bangor Dyslexia Screening Test	Helps to identify children at risk of dyslexia	2 <sup>nd</sup>	February/ after Micra T	SEN teacher (Individual testing)
6	MICRA-T	English reading and comprehension skills	1 <sup>st</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup>	May	Class Teacher
7	SIGMA-T	Mathematical attainment	1 <sup>st</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup>	May	Class Teacher
8	NRIT – Non Reading Intelligence Test (6y 4m – 10y 11m)	Gives a general ability quotient for intelligence  Useful for prioritising children for psychological assessments	2 <sup>nd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> classes	April	Class Teacher
9	Running Records	Literacy progress/PM benchmarks or teacher can use templates with selected pages from other novels/readers	JI- 6 <sup>th</sup>	Monthly	Class teacher With SEN if necessary
10	Dolch List	Tests child's recognition of top 220 sights words	JI to 6 <sup>th</sup>	September & as required	Class Teacher
11	Maths Recovery testing	Tests child's number knowledge	Senior Infants	May	SEN team
12	Drumcondra Profiles	Tess vocabulary / oral language	All classes Target groups	May / June	SEN team with Class Teacher
13	VB-MAPP	Verbal behaviour milestones assessment	Autism class	As required	Autism class teacher