



DOMINICAN COLLEGE MUCKROSS PARK

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS POLICY

(Ratified by the Board of Management on 13th March 2024)

'Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire'.
Catherine of Siena

Our Vision

As a school in the Catholic, Dominican tradition, our educational vision as expressed in our motto, Veritas, encompasses the lifelong search for truth, respect for tradition, and commitment to human flourishing.

Our Mission

We are proud of our lived Christian heritage, which inspires us to welcome and respect people of all backgrounds and beliefs. We tailor our educational approach to the needs of each individual student. We aim to excel in teaching and learning and provide an extensive programme of additional activities as we believe that every student deserves the opportunity to flourish.

Sustained by our Dominican tradition, we invite our students to engage with the values of Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Our educational community cultivates care in our students and staff for themselves, their neighbours, and their planet. We aim to strengthen empathy, nurture integrity and discernment, and generate a love of lifelong learning throughout our school community.

The Legal Context

This policy is prepared with reference to the following legislation: The Education Act 1998(EA), the Education Welfare Act 2000(EWA), the Equal Status Act 2000(ESA), and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004(EPSEN).

The Context of the School's Admissions Policy

Special Education Teaching (S.E. T.)

Dominican College Muckross Park, in compliance with its Mission Statement and keeping in mind the Dominican ethos and values of the school, welcomes applications from students with SEN (Special Education Needs) The school operates an open admissions policy, promoting equality of access, participation and benefit for all in as far as the school can fulfil the needs of an individual student. The Board of Management is committed to ensuring full entitlement and access for pupils with special educational needs to high quality education with a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, so that they can reach their full potential and enhance their self-esteem.

This is consistent with the provisions of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2002, Section 2, which provides that "a child with special educational needs shall be educated in an

inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or the degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with

- (a) the best interests of the child in accordance with any assessment carried out under this act, or
- (b) the effective provision of education with whom the child is to be educated. "

Working Definition of Special Education Needs

"Special education needs" means, in relation to a person, a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition.

While the definition in the act does not refer to students with emotional or behavioural difficulties, section 7 (4)(b) of the Equal Status Act 2000 does indicate a category of special needs in this case and the school will be mindful of such students also in providing for special needs.

Aims of the Special Education Needs (SEN) Policy in D.C. Muckcross Park

- To ensure full entitlement and access for pupils with SEN to a high quality education with a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, so that they can reach their full potential and enhance their self-esteem.
- To educate pupils with learning needs, wherever possible, alongside their peers within the normal curriculum after giving due consideration to the appropriate wishes of their parents and the necessity to meet individual needs.
- To identify and assess pupils as early and thoroughly as is possible and necessary in order to ensure that we can answer those needs.
- To fully involve parents and pupils in the identification, assessment and delivery of Learning Support and to strive for close co-operation between all concerned, and a multi-disciplinary approach to the resolution of pertinent issues.
- To meet the needs of all pupils who have learning difficulties, by offering continual and appropriate forms of educational provision by the most efficient use of all available resources.
- To enable all staff to play a part in identifying SEN pupils and to take responsibility for recognizing and addressing their individual needs.
- To stimulate and maintain pupil curiosity, interest and enjoyment in their education.
- To enable pupils with learning difficulties to be familiar with literacy, numeracy and basic skills, in order for them to lead full and productive lives.

In order to ensure these aims are fulfilled, Management needs to be aware of any specific needs as early as possible, so that these needs can be assessed and addressed if possible. Reports should be submitted prior to school commencement. Management, in conjunction with parents, forward all relevant information the National Council for Special Education Needs (NCSE) who allocate resources based the Department of Education and Skills policy.

In making provision for special need students the school needs to know whether the incoming student has had access to any of the following resources:

- Special Needs Assistant or Classroom Assistant
- A Special Class
- Help, for specific needs, from any Resource /learning Support Teacher
- Assistance with behavioural modification
- Psychological assessment - report to be provided where possible prior to commencement
- Any additional resources to help with their special needs
- Help in areas including, visual impairment, hearing impairment, general learning disability and/or emotional disturbance, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Any resource in relation to travel or mobility, etc.
- Other resources not listed above

Note: If an expert report is provided, it should include a workable strategy for addressing the needs, allowing for the resources available.

Having gathered all relevant information and professional documentation, the school will assess whether and how the specific needs of the students can be met and assign a resource teacher.

It may take some time for the Department of Education and Skills to process such applications.

Parents are strongly advised to inform the school as early as possible and discuss their individual needs well in advance of their child's commencement in first year.

The school will use the resources provided by the Department of Education and Skills to make reasonable provision and accommodation for students with disabilities or special educational needs.

The Department has set out the Continuum of Support framework to assist schools in identifying and responding to students' needs. This framework recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long term, and that students require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs. Using this framework helps to ensure that interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support, and that they are informed by careful monitoring of progress.

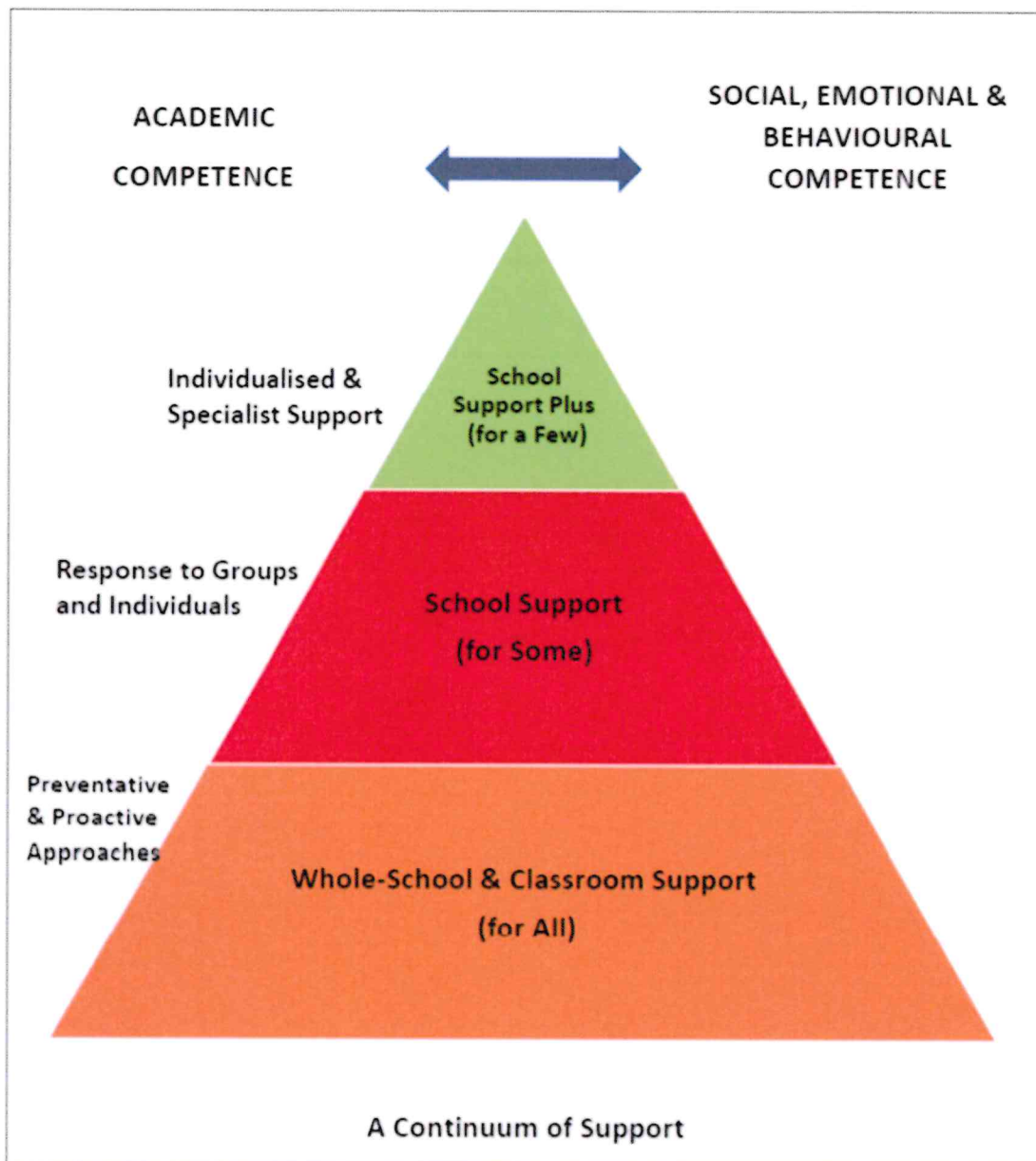
Further to the procedures outlined above and in accordance with Section 14. I (e) of the EPSEN Act 2004, the school shall ensure that "teachers and other relevant employees of the school are aware of the importance of identifying children and students who have special educational needs."

Access to Learning Support

The following groups of students may qualify for learning support in the school (Students do not need to be assessed to avail of learning support):

- Students who have had a psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support/Resource teaching, and who have been granted resource hours in either the high or low incidence categories.
- Students who have psychological assessments which recommend Learning Support, but who have not been granted resource hours may be accommodated in Learning Support or Subject Support groupings.
- Students who have not been assessed but who display profound difficulties in their Entrance Assessments may be offered Learning Support. Parents of these students will be consulted with a view to accommodating their child in a Learning/Subject Support Group.
- Students who are identified by teachers, parents, or who request it themselves during the year can be accommodated within existing groupings if deemed appropriate.

Students who are in receipt of Learning Support/ Resource hours may need to be assessed in school by the Learning Support/Resource team for the purposes of determining how best to support their individual learning needs. These assessments will consist of both formal and informal assessments. Formal assessment will include but may not be limited to the Diagnostic Reading Assessment, CAT4, WRAT 4, Malt 12/13/14, WIART III and oral language assessment. Informal assessment will include but will not be limited to; writing samples, maths samples, learning style and in class observations. All assessment results are private and confidential to each student and their parents/guardians.



Individual Withdrawal is used only where a student requires specialised individual support.

Small Group Withdrawal is the preferred method of provision with most students in resource and learning support getting their allocation in small groups. The organisation of these groupings is the job of Special Education Needs Coordinator. (SENCO)

Groups are arranged on the basis of similar need profiles and the capacity to withdraw students at the same time. Withdrawal for small groups usually occurs during Irish for those students who are exempt and during continental language for those not doing a language.

Reduced Timetable. A small number of students whom it is deemed, after consultation with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Psychologists, parents and teachers, cannot sustain a full curriculum, have their timetable reduced. In so far as is possible, extra learning support or more classes in remaining subjects are provided at the time of the dropped subjects.

Team teaching/in class support. Teachers work together, in the classroom, to provide a differentiated learning experience.

Access to Psychological Reports

Individual files will be kept on each student. Information in the files includes psychological reports, results from entrance assessments, correspondence between the school, parents and other relevant agencies, and applications for support and concessions.

Files are maintained by the Special Education Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO) and access is afforded to the following personnel- the School Principal, the Deputy Principal, members of the SEN Department, the Year Heads and the Guidance Counsellor.

Beyond these individuals, information regarding special needs is communicated to the Special Education Teaching (SET) team on a need to know basis. In accordance with section 14(1.d) of the EPSEN Act 2004, the school 'shall ensure that all relevant teachers and other relevant employees of the school are aware of the SEN of students'.

Information is provided to teachers at the first staff meeting. Other newly identified students are notified to the teachers as the year progresses. This is the responsibility of the SEN Coordinator.

Involvement of the Educational Partners

Role of the Board of Management

To ensure that a policy is in place and that it is reviewed regularly.

To make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

To ensure that the school meets its requirements in relation to inclusion under the Education Act (1998).

Role of the Principal and Deputy Principal

To assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policies on SEN and Learning Support.

To sanction exemption from certain subjects as requested.

To ensure adequate timetabling of hours for learning support and resource hours.

To allocate time for staff to reflect, review and plan curricular arrangements, for planning of Support Plans (SSPs) for consulting with support personnel and other professionals regarding the needs, progress, and review of individual students. To provide adequate time for review of policy by the SEN team as required.

To organise the Inservice training in Special Education Needs (SEN) for staff.

To allocate some time on teachers timetables to facilitate starting the VE-P/SSP scheme of work process.

Role of the Guidance Counsellor

To participate in the preparation of the SEN Policy of the school.

To work with the Special Needs Team and other staff in the implementation and review of this policy.

To liaise on an ongoing basis with the other members of the SEN Team and Pastoral Care Team as relevant matters arise.

To provide a range of services to all students, including careers information, study skills and examination techniques, consultation with parents, referral services etc. with an awareness of the SEN of students.

To work together with SEN Team to conduct assessments of incoming first years and other students new to the school.

To advise the Principal of any matters arising from such assessments.

To support students who have been referred.

To advise on supports available at third level for SEN students and to assist students in assessing these supports.

To act as an advocate for the SEN student ensuring that her voice is heard when decisions concerning SEN are being made.

Role of the Special education Needs Coordinator (SENCO)

To organise and complete applications for reasonable accommodation at certificate examinations (RACE)

To coordinate the collection of assessments of Incoming students and works with parents and feeder schools to identify students with special needs.

To work with the Principal and Deputy Principal in the allocation of students to classes and the allocation of students to individual Learning Support teachers.

To work with the others Learning Support teachers, parents and others in developing S.S.P. for the students.

To be responsible for timetabling provisions for Learning Support.

To be responsible for the submission of N.C.S.E. forms.

To be responsible for liaising with external service providers i.e NEPS and the Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO)

To coordinate the exemptions from Irish and the reasonable accommodations for the State Examinations.

To organise assessments with NEPS.

To work with Special Needs Assistants.

To communicate with the Principal, Deputy Principal and staff at the start of the year, any information concerning new pupils and update as required.

To organise term meetings with parents of all low incident pupils and as many high incident meetings as possible.

Role of the Learning Support Teachers

To teach individual and small groups of students requiring learning support.

To liaise with the SEN team in the development of an IEP/scheme of work for these students.

To liaise with subject teachers and other departments on employing differentiated teaching methods and resources in their subject teaching.

Role of the Inclusion Support Assistant

To carry out duties as assigned by the Principal in accordance with Circular 10/76.

To cater for the care needs of the SEN Students, including assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene.

To provide special assistance where necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. writing, typing, photocopying etc.

To provide assistance on out-of-school activities as may be required.

To assist in the organisation and procurement of items needed for class e.g. textbooks, P.E. gear etc. and in the organisation of the student's locker.

To assist the teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods.

To encourage each pupil to become more independent and self-reliant.

Role of the Subject Teachers

To implement the SEN Policy by taking into account the needs and learning styles of all their students and to employ suitable teaching methods so that all students can access the curriculum at an appropriate level.

To take steps to inform themselves of the special needs of any student in their class and to bring any concerns regarding such a student to the relevant personnel.

Parental Involvement

The school believes that effectiveness of any assessment or intervention will be influenced by the involvement and interest of the child and his/her parents. Both the parents and the students have important and relevant information to offer.

Parents are invited to contact the Learning Support Department by email or phone call during the year in addition to meeting the Learning Support teachers at Parent/Teacher Meetings.

Parents are always contacted if a student is to be referred for assessment and afterwards to discuss the outcome of the assessment, the development of a SSP (Student Support Plan) and the review of the SSP.

Parents are expected to support the work of the school with the student and to ensure the correct use and maintenance of any aids or equipment that are provided for the student.

Student Involvement

To contribute to the drawing up of learning programmes and the setting of learning targets for themselves.

To contribute to the selection of texts and other materials that may help to reach these targets.

To contribute to the review of learning programmes.

To cooperate with the agreed programme and its evaluation by participation in appropriate tests and assessments.

Links with Outside Agencies and Services

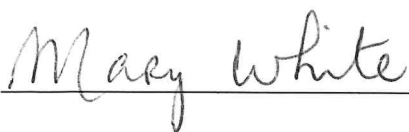
The EPSEN Act (2004) assures interlinking provision between the National Council for Special Education Needs (NCSE), The National Education Welfare Board (NEWB), and the Health Executive and school.

In accordance with this act, the school will work with the local SENO the local N.E.P.S. psychologist, the local resource teachers for the Blind and the Hearing impaired, psychologists, or psychiatrists from the social welfare Department and the Health Executive and any other relevant professionals in providing an integrated response to the needs of any particular student.

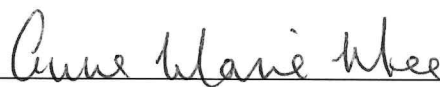
It may be necessary to hold case meetings with relevant professionals with the permission and knowledge of the student's parents (and their attendance) in order to determine the best approach and provision for the students in question.

Notes from such meetings will be recorded and maintained in the student's file.

This policy was ratified and adopted by the Board of Management on 13th March 2024



Chairperson of the Board of Management



Principal

Date 13 March 2024

Appendix/Glossary

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) supports the personal, social and educational development of all children through the application of psychological theory and practice in education. The service is organised on a regional basis with psychologists being assigned to a group of schools. Where a school doesn't have an assigned psychologist, it can avail of a service from an independently employed panel of psychologists.

Psychologists work with teachers, parents and children in identifying educational needs. Where an individual assessment is required, it will only be carried out with the written consent of the parents or guardians. Psychologists provide oral and written feedback to both parents/guardians and teachers.

A psychological service is also provided to all schools in the event of a critical incident.

Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO)

SENOs are appointed by the NCSE to provide a direct local service to the parents of children with special educational needs and to schools within geographical areas.

This involves identifying the needs of children and deciding on the level of resources schools require to provide them with an appropriate education service.

A SENO deals with applications for additional teaching and Special Needs Assistant support for children with special educational needs from all schools. The SENO also assists with applications for transport and Assistive Technology. A SENO can advise schools and parents on the facilities, services, and resources available to assist children with Special Educational Needs.

National Education Welfare Board

The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was established in 2002 under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. The various strands of the NEWB, the School Completion Programme (SCP), the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) and the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) work together collaboratively and cohesively to secure better educational outcomes for children and young people.

In June 2011, the functions of the National Educational Welfare Board transferred to the newly established office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The new Department will focus strongly on harmonising policy issues that affect children in areas such as early childhood care, education and participation, youth justice, child welfare and protection and research.

Glossary of abbreviated terms associated with special educational needs

- NCCA — National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
- SEC — State Examinations Commission
- RACE — Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations
- NEPS - National Education Psychological Service
- CAMHS — Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- School Support Service for Teachers
- NCSE — National Council for Special Education ▪ EAL — English as an additional language
- SENO — Special Educational Needs Organiser
- NEWB — National Education Welfare Board
- EWO — Education Welfare Officer
- ILSA — Irish Learning Support teachers Association
- IATSE — Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education
- ACE — Aiding Communication in Education
- AHEAD — Association for Higher Access and Disability
- DARE — Disability Access Route to Education
- HEAR — Higher Education Access Route
- HSE — Health Service Executive
- OT — Occupational Therapist
- S< — Speech and Language Therapist ▪ DLP — Designated Liaison Person
- VT - Visiting Teacher (Deaf Hear/Visual)

Disability Codes

- 1 Physical Disability
- 2 Hearing Impairment HI
- 3 Visual Impairment
- 4 Emotional Disturbance EBD
- 5 Severe Emotional Disturbance SEBD
- 6 Borderline Mild General Learning Disability MGLD
- 7 Mild General Learning Disability GLD
- 8 Moderate General Learning Disability MODGLD
- 9 Severe/Profound General Learning Disability S/PGLD
- 10 Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders ASD
- 11 Specific Learning Disability SLD
- 12 Assessed Syndrome
- 13 Specific Speech and Language Disorder S&LD
- 14 Multiple Disabilities

NCSE - Disability Codes

- EA — Students with exceptional ability
- TBI — Traumatic Brain Injury
- SIB — Self Injurious Behaviour
- DCD — Developmental Disorder — Dyspraxia
- DS — Downs Syndrome
- CP — Cerebral Palsy
- SERC — Special Education Review Committee
- TALIS — Teaching and Learning International Survey
- EPSEN — Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act
- PISA — Programme for International Student Assessment