

Special Educational Needs Policy Crusheen N.S.

Introductory Statement

This policy was drafted by the Special Education Teacher (SET) in consultation with the Principal, teaching staff and parents of Crusheen National School. It was ratified by the BOM in February 2016.

Guiding Principles

We want all children, particularly those with disabilities to feel that they are a valued part of the School Community. We do this through inclusion which has at its core, the following principles:

- Setting suitable learning challenges.
- Responding to children's diverse learning needs.
- Overcoming barriers to learning and assessment.

Rationale

The school understands that a pupil has a Special Education Need (SEN) if they have a restricted capacity to benefit from education due to an enduring condition. The school also understands that a pupil with a special education need is a pupil who is at risk of not attaining adequate literacy or numeracy levels.

Special education provision in the school will endeavour to provide access to education and learning to pupils experiencing difficulties.

The rationale for this policy is to ensure compliance with the Education Act (1998), the Education Welfare Act (2000), the Equal Status Act (2000), the Disability Bill (2002) and the E.P.S.E.N. Act (2004).

Relationship to School Ethos

Crusheen N.S. strives to create learning opportunities for all children and that commitment underpins all school planning and policy documents. We endeavour to cater for children with special educational needs as their presence in the school enriches the entire school community in accordance with the guidelines of the E.P.S.E.N. Act (2004).

Aims and Objectives

- To outline our whole school approach to teaching/learning in relation to pupils with special educational needs.
- To outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs.
- To establish communication structures for the involvement of all the partners in the education of pupils with special educational needs.

Preventing Learning Difficulties

Our strategies for preventing learning difficulties are:

- Development of agreed approaches to language development and to teaching other aspects of English and Mathematics in order to ensure progression and continuity from class to class.
- Provision of additional support in language development and relevant early literacy and mathematical skills to pupils who need support.
- 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.

Enrolment of children with identified Special Educational Needs

(Refer to Enrolment Policy)

- The principal will organise a pre-enrolment meeting between parents/guardians of the pupil with a view to establishing his/her specific needs.
- The school will follow the procedure as outlined in the Enrolment Policy for Crusheen N.S. as follows:

“A Parents who wish to enrol children with specific needs are required to furnish the school with all the relevant documentation including medical and/or psychological reports. Following receipt of the reports and prior to the enrolment of the child, the Board of Management will assess the resources needed to fulfil the educational and/or training needs of the child. The Board will request the Department of Education and Skills to provide such resources.”

- The principal will establish contact with Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO), and with parental permission the psychologist/ speech therapist/occupational therapist and other relevant agencies.
- The Board of Management will refer to guidelines set out in the E.P.SE.N. Act (2004) and the Education Act when considering the enrolment of a pupil with special needs:

“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 degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with –

- a) The best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under this Act, or*
- b) The effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated” (E.P.S.E.N. Act 2004).*

- Health and safety issues will be discussed by the principal and the class teacher with the parents and issues such as accessibility, toilet facilities, supervision and administration of medicines will also be considered.

Children with Emerging Special Educational Needs.

(The Staged Approach) (See Circular 02/05)

Stage 1: Procedures for the early identification, screening and addressing of the SEN of certain children.

- The class teacher or parent may observe weaknesses in the academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development of a child.
- The class teacher will use teacher observation, checklists/profiles and Infant screening tests for children in junior and senior infants and norm-referenced standardised Maths or English tests in older classes. Behavioural checklists will also be used by the class teacher where appropriate.
- The school uses the M.I.S.T. screening test for Infant classes and the Micra-T and Sigma-T for English and Maths screening of older classes.
- The class teacher will consult with parents on the parents' experience of the child's progress and suggest ways that the parent can help support the child's work at home.
- The class teacher will observe the child's progress in class and consult with the parents. If the child does not make sufficient progress following a period of additional support in the classroom then the child will be referred to the Learning Support teacher and Stage 2 of the Continuum of Support will be implemented.

Factors to be considered in determining the priority for provision for supplementary teaching:

1. Children with a learning difficulty confirmed through assessment.
2. Children performing at or below the 10th percentile in standardised tests of achievement in English.
3. Children performing at or below the 10th percentile in standardised tests of achievement in Maths.
4. Senior Infants/First Class – early intervention programmes for low achievers in English based on class teacher's observations and recommendations.
5. Senior Infants/First Class – early intervention programmes for low achievers in Maths based on class teacher's observations and recommendations.
6. Children performing below the 20th percentile in standardised tests of achievement in English.
7. Children performing below the 20th percentile in standardised tests of achievement in Maths.
8. Priority is given to those in the junior section of the school (Senior Infants to Second Class).
9. Arrangements for providing supplementary teaching to pupils in the senior section who experience very low achievement.
10. The nature and severity of the pupils' learning difficulties will ultimately influence group size but ideally it should not exceed four pupils.

Stage 2. Referral to Learning Support/Resource teacher

- The class teacher will already have made concerns known to the parent and will now request a meeting together with the Learning Support/Resource (LS/RT) teacher.
- With parental permission, the LS/RT will perform diagnostic testing on the child to assess the areas of greatest learning need. These tests include phonological awareness checklists, miscue analysis, teacher designed tests and the M.I.S.T. diagnostic test.
- The LS/RT will draw up an individual profile and learning plan in consultation with the class teacher and parents.
- The LS/RT will seek consent from the parent/guardian for the child to attend learning support sessions.
- The individual education plan will be reviewed by the LS/RT at the end of every instructional term and new targets will be set for the next instructional term.
- Supplementary teaching is discontinued in the case of the child reaching predefined targets and making significant progress in mathematics or literacy.
- The child's progress is assessed by class teacher observation, LS/RT observation, parent observation and diagnostic testing.
- A child is moved to Stage 3 if the child fails to reach predefined targets and fails to progress in their area of need.
- This decision is a consensus of opinion from the class teacher, LS/RT, principal and parents.

Stage 3. Consultation or referral for assessment to outside specialists

- A child is referred to the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) if deemed necessary. The Principal/SET may also advise parents to ask for a referral to a speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, audiologist etc.
- If a child is in need of a psycho-educational assessment the principal in consultation with parents will contact NEPS.
- Priority for supplementary teaching is given to those children with an identified learning difficulty and the educational needs of children in the junior classes are prioritised. (Senior Infants to Second Class)
- If the child is diagnosed with a Low Incidence Disability (see circular 02/05) and assigned Resource Teaching Support hours, the Resource Teacher will draw up an Individual Education Plan (IEP) based on professional reports and information received from the class teacher, parents and school assessments.
- The Resource Teacher will meet with the class teacher, Principal, parents and S.N.A. on a regular basis (ideally at the end of every instructional term) to review the child's progress and set new targets.

Planning and Implementing an Intervention Programme

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) aims to set out the child's learning strengths and areas of greatest need. It presents all information gathered on the child's learning, assessments to date and recommendations from specialist bodies. It is desirable that all S.E.T.s would follow the same format of IEP.

The IEP should include the following:

- The nature and degree of the child's abilities, skills and talents.
- The nature and degree of the child's special educational needs and how these needs affect his or her educational development.
- The present level of educational performance of the child.
- The special education and related support services to be provided to the child to enable the child to benefit from learning experiences and to participate in school activities.
- The child's priority learning needs.
- The child's agreed learning targets and an agreed time limit for these targets to be achieved by. (Usually these will be reviewed when the I.P.L.P. is reviewed which is every instructional term.)

Exemptions from the study of Irish

Crusheen N.S. encourages all children to participate fully with the Irish curriculum in particular the oral language aspects which are readily accessible to most children. Exemptions from the study of Irish must be recommended by an Educational Psychological report.

An exemption from the study of Irish means that a student attending a primary or post-primary school is not required to study Irish. Irish is a compulsory subject in schools recognised by the D.E.S. however there are certain limited circumstances whereby an exemption may be granted. The authority to grant an exemption has been delegated to school management.

How to apply, and where to apply for an exemption from the study of Irish.

A written application for an exemption is made by the parent or guardian to the school principal on behalf of their child. The application should state the reasons why the exemption is being sought. **A child will only be considered for an exemption where his/her educational circumstances come within the provisions of the primary circular (12/96)** in the case of a primary school going child.

When the Principal is satisfied that the application for the exemption from the study of Irish satisfies the requirements of Circular 12/96 she will grant the exemption from the study of Irish and will furnish parents with a Certificate of Exemption for their child.

Crusheen N.S.

Information on exemptions from the study of Irish granted are passed on by all schools to the D.E.S. each year.

For more information log onto the DES website at www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish-Exemption

Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal

The principal has overall responsibility for the provision of SEN in the school and has a co-ordinating role between class teachers, the Learning Support (RT), the Resource teacher (RT), Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), parents and outside bodies. She ensures that the SEN policies and procedures are carried out by personnel and supervises record-keeping for SEN pupils.

The Class Teacher

The Class Teacher has responsibility for the education of SEN pupils in his/her class, is involved in differentiating the curriculum and directs the work of the SNAs. She also carries out screening tests for literacy and implements Stage 1 education plans.

The Learning Support

The LS has a consultative role on issues of SEN within the school and carries out diagnostic assessment on at-risk pupils. The LS provides supplementary teaching to pupils at Stage 2 and children with high incidence disabilities. The LS maintains IPLPs and other relevant records on all children on her caseload and consults with the parents, the Principal and class-teachers.

The Resource Teacher

The RT has a consultative role on issues of SEN within the school and carries out diagnostic assessment on pupils assigned to resource. She provides supplementary teaching to pupils at Stage 3 with low incidence disabilities. The Resource teacher also maintains IEPs and other relevant records on pupils on her caseload and consults with parents, class teachers, SNAs and the Principal.

Special Education Co-ordinator

The Special Education Co-ordinator manages the day to day implementation of policies and procedure in relation to SEN. She liaises closely with the Principal.

Special Needs Assistants *(ref. Circular 07/02)*

The Special Needs Assistant or S.N.A. is assigned duties by the principal teacher in accordance with D.E.S. guidelines and sanctioned by the Board of Management. Her work will be supervised either by the principal or by a class teacher. The duties involve tasks of a non-teaching nature such as:

1. Working classroom hours and attending before and after school in order to help with preparation and tidying up of classrooms in which the pupil(s) with special needs is/are being taught.
2. Special assistance as necessary for pupils with S.E.N. under their care.
3. Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene.
4. Assistance on out-of-school visits, walks and similar activities.
5. Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods
6. Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom.
7. Ensuring that the child is focused on the task set by the class teacher and that the child completes work assigned by the class teacher.
8. Supporting the special needs pupil while encouraging the child towards independence and participation in class activities or recreational activities during break times.
9. General assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature.
10. Consulting with the class teacher and R.T. and giving feedback on learning tasks and assignments set by the class teacher.
11. Consulting with Principal, Resource Teacher, parents of the child with SEN, Educational Psychologist and other professionals working with the child on issues related to the child under their care.

Resources

An inventory of resources (see Appendix 2) is maintained within the school by the SET, who in collaboration with the teaching staff decides on the purchase of resources based on a child's priority learning needs and these purchases are discussed with the principal before a decision is made.

Inclusion

The staff of Crusheen N.S. endeavour to ensure that children with special needs are included in school activities as much as is possible.

Communication

Informal discussion between staff on issues of arising from special needs provision, as well as formal meetings take place on a regular basis between staff members on such issues as timetabling, assessing pupils' progress and setting new learning targets. Meetings between the LST and parents take place at the end of every instructional term. Meetings between class teachers, S. N. A.s and Resource teachers will take place generally at the start of term or as the need arises.

Code of Behaviour

The class teacher will ensure that children with special educational needs are given clear instruction on school rules. The class teacher will make the children particularly aware of rules surrounding safety issues where their learning difficulty may impair their ability to perceive danger.

Pupils with special needs will be required to follow our school's Code of Behaviour. However, teachers will use their professional judgement in relation to regularity and level of sanctions. Teachers and SNAs will endeavour to support the pupil with special needs in understanding why their behaviour is unacceptable and the purpose of any sanction imposed. As always, the emphasis is on the positive and rewarding good behaviour.

Transfer to Post-Primary

The principal and SET will consult with the parents and the relevant S.E.N.O. to ensure that the transition from primary to post-primary is as smooth as possible for the child and his/her family.

Record Keeping

- Records of the child's assessments from outside bodies, IEPs, records of screening and diagnostic testing are held by the school in a secured filing cabinet.
- The class teacher, LST, Resource teacher, SENO, inspector and parents have access to the child's file.
- The class teacher, Resource teacher, LST teacher and principal contribute to this file.
- The file is kept in the school for as long as the child is attending the school and for nine years after the child leaves the school.

Timetabling

Timetabling for Resource and Learning Support is done through a collaborative approach between LST, RT, Class teachers and Principal. Every effort is made to ensure that children are not removed from the same curricular area each day. Due recognition is taken of the specific needs of each child.

Out of School Trips

School trips are a regular feature of Crusheen N.S. Permission forms in relation to the proposed trips and for seeking medical assistance in the event of an accident are sought from parents. A number of contactable mobile phone numbers are held by staff. SNAs are issued with clear instructions as to their duties for the day.

Complaints Procedure

Parents who have a complaint must first contact the LST, Resource Teacher or Class Teacher, whichever is appropriate. The complaint is investigated and if not resolved is referred to the Principal. If the matter remains unresolved, it will proceed to the B.O.M. for consideration.

Other/Issues

1. The school has Safety Statement and An Administration of Medicines Policy
2. The school promotes a positive school environment through SPHE

Success Criteria

The success of our Special Needs Policy will be indicated by:

- Inclusion of pupils with special needs into our school
- Progress of pupils with special needs in our school
- Parents comments and feedback
- Feedback from teaching staff, special needs assistant, pupils, psychologists
- Inspector's Report
- Testing

Monitoring

The school will evaluate the effectiveness of Special Needs Provision through monitoring standards reached, case samples from children, the views of parents, staff feedback and continued levels of intervention.

Ratification and Communication

This policy is to be circulated to:

- All teaching staff
- Parents of Special Needs pupils
- Special Needs Assistants.

Implementation Date

This policy will be implemented from February 2016 and will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it remains relevant and reflective of school practice.