

Colaiste Muire
Special Educational Needs Policy
A Whole School Approach
2024



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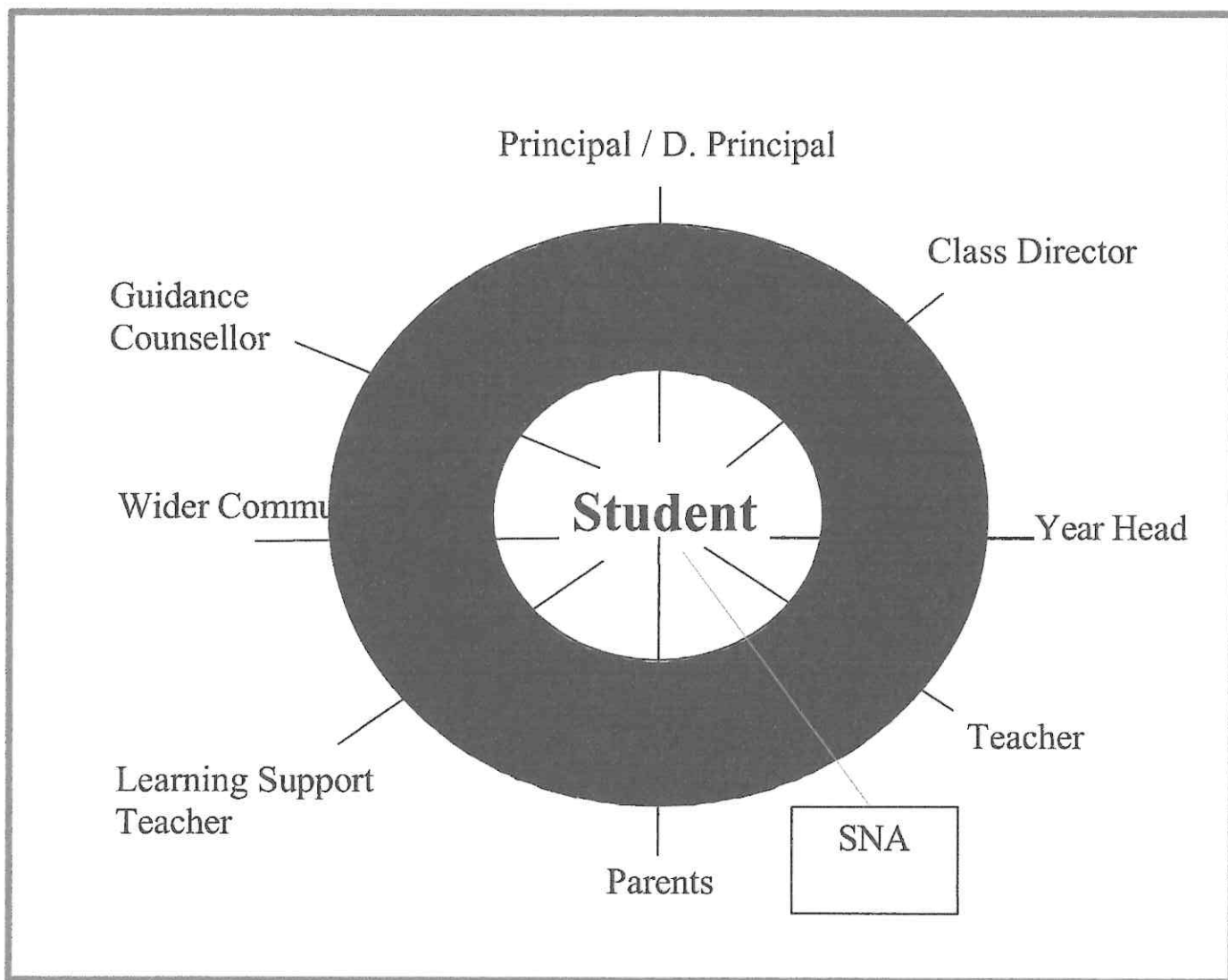
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A whole school approach to the Education and Welfare of our students.

The student is central to all our endeavors



INTRODUCTION

Mission Statement

Coláiste Muire is an all girls secondary school under the trusteeship of CEIST. Our current enrolment is 978. We are committed to developing a dynamic Christian School Community, which fosters spiritual and personal development. We strive for academic excellence and seek to nurture a sense of self-worth, while having particular concern for the needs of the academically and socially disadvantaged.

In line with the Mercy philosophy, the holistic development and full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised, are of utmost importance. We strive to create an atmosphere of care, respect, inclusion and joy. Mercy education is committed to on-going whole school development in collaboration and partnership with the Board of Management, teaching staff, parents and the wider community.

Consultation

This policy was formulated in consultation with the teaching staff and management of Coláiste Muire, parents, students, the Board of Management (BOM) and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs).

RATIONALE

This policy applies to all students with additional needs and includes students with exceptional ability, who attend Coláiste Muire. It is also intended to serve the school community including the Board of Management, the principal, the teaching and ancillary staff, SNAs and parents.

- The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to the stakeholders around the structure of supports of students with additional educational needs in our school.
- The policy is a working document and will be reviewed regularly.
- The policy is to inform stakeholders on our current practice.

RELATIONSHIP TO CHARACTERISTIC SPIRIT OF THE SCHOOL

The principal aim of Learning Support in Coláiste Muire is to provide a positive learning environment, which will foster the academic, social and emotional development of students with SEN and to enable each to realise their individual potential. In line with our ethos and official Department of Education and Skills (DES) recommendations, learning support strategies will actively seek to include the diverse range of cultures and abilities of its students.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Coláiste Muire sets out to provide education for all its students, with reference to legislation regarding students with SEN as listed below:

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Education Welfare Act (2000)
- The Equal Status Act (2000)
- The Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill (2003)
- The Equality Act (2004)
- The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)
- The Freedom of Education Acts (1997 and 2003)
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)

This policy is drafted in the context of:

- DES Circular Letters
- The guidelines published by the NCSE
- The guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process 2006
- The Guidelines on the Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools (NEPS).

The Board of Management notes the Department has not activated all aspects of the EPSEN Act and consequently the school does not have the resources to develop Individual Education Plans as originally envisioned. However the school will endeavour to provide Student Support Plans as is possible and develop Personal Pupil Plans (PPPs).

AIMS OF THE POLICY

The principal aim of Learning Support in Coláiste Muire is to provide a positive learning environment, which will foster the academic, social and emotional development of students with additional educational needs and to enable each to realise their individual potential.

Learning Support provision also strives to:

- Enable pupils of all abilities to avail of and benefit from an appropriate education.
- Provide students with consistent opportunities to experience success.
- Provide supplementary teaching and additional support in literacy and numeracy.
- Involve parents in the support of their daughter's education.
- Promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of a whole school policy on learning support for pupils.
- Protect and enhance the self-esteem of the learner.
- To assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child in our school.
- Have students with SEN educated in an inclusive environment.
- Have all relevant members of staff aware of the specific needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.
- Ensure that SEN is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.
- Have students with SEN offered a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Provide teachers with opportunities to engage with relevant training
- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at home.

DEFINITIONS

Special Educational Needs

In the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) the term “special educational needs” is defined as

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...

(Government of Ireland, 2004b, section 1) <http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2004/A3004.pdf>

Inclusion

For the purposes of this document, the following definition by the NCSE, has been adopted.

Inclusion is defined as a process of:

- addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners through enabling participation in learning, cultures, and communities.
- removing barriers to education through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements, to enable each learner to achieve the maximum benefit from his/ her attendance at school.

Literature Review of the Principles and Practices relating to Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs (NCSE 2010, p.39)

Special Educational Needs Policy - A Whole School Approach

Board of Management	Principal/Senior Management Team	SEN Co-Ordinator/SEN Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote whole school inclusion of students with SEN. • To oversee the development, implementation and review of the school's SEN policy. • To oversee the appropriate provision of resources to students with additional needs. • To promote the professional development of staff in supporting students with additional needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To appoint a SEN Co-ordinator and works closely with the co-ordinator. • To keep the Board of Management abreast of developments in SEN. • To oversee the effective and efficient use of resources, including the allocation of resource hours and funds. • To continually develop an SEN core team • To promote a whole school approach to special educational needs. make all staff aware of their responsibilities in this area and to facilitate appropriate staff development in this area. • To promote the development of positive partnerships with parents of SEN students. • To oversee procedures for consultation with primary schools with regard to the enrolment of students with SEN. • To oversee applications for Irish Exemptions. • To oversee the implementation of policies and practices • To ensure compliance with statutory requirements • To oversee the work of the SNA team • To oversee assignment of roles and responsibilities as they relate to SEN • To oversee transfer of students outside of regular intake in first year and the induction of new teachers as they relate to additional needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain an up to date school register of students with SEN to which teachers refer. • To assist in the identification of students with SEN. • To assist the Principal in the allocation of resources. • To assist in processing applications for Reasonable Accommodations at State Exams (RACE) • To liaise with outside relevant professionals and parents where relevant • To have systems in place for the referral of students by teachers, parents, etc • To be represented on the Pastoral Care Team. • To collaborate with SNA's around the care needs of relevant students and facilitate a weekly meeting

Year Head/ Class Director		Support Teacher		Guidance Department	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To nurture a supportive and inclusive climate within the school and contribute to the work of the special educational needs support team. • To support the inclusion of students with special educational needs by monitoring the student's progress within the year group. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide diagnostic and informal assessments for students in order to monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention • Collaborating with subject teachers by giving advice on teaching methodologies best suited to a student. • Providing direct teaching to a student with SEN either to reinforce the teaching that takes place in the classroom or to improve upon the core skills that may be necessary to successfully access the second level curriculum. • To provide team teaching/ cooperative teaching when withdrawal from the classroom may not be the most appropriate means of supporting the student. • Contributing at meetings involving parents and/or outside agencies when appropriate. • Planning, implementing and reviewing individual and/or group interventions • Develop appropriate plans of work for students. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide counselling in personal, educational and career development • Co-ordinate the CAT4 in first and third year. • Providing career guidance • Presenting at the Information Evening for students and parents of students progressing to Senior Cycle • Working with Year Heads and the SEN team to identify students requiring support • Advising students and parents on subject choice and subject load • To liaise with students, parents and the SEN team in relation to DARE/HEAR applications. • To be a member of the Pastoral Care Team • To advise where relevant, on curricular decisions re Irish exemptions, subject levels etc. 	

SNA	Class Teacher
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide care assistance to named students who have care needs. • Do help develop Personal Pupil Plans where relevant • Attending staff meetings when appropriate. • Assisting / escorting students on school trips. • Assisting the teacher in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreation and in movement from one classroom to another. • Accompanying individual or small groups who may be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom. An SNA should not be asked to withdraw a student from a classroom unless this is a strategy that has been agreed by the SEN department and Principal, where teachers and parents will have been informed. • Give general assistance to the subject teacher, under the direction of the Principal/Deputy Principal, of a non-teaching nature. The SNA may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class. • Participation and contribute to school development planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school development process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To refer to the Sen Register of students on a regular basis and be informed of students with additional needs in their classes. • To seek advice from the SEN team regarding students with SEN where they have a query. • To engage in CPD in the area of SEN. • To devise a plan, in consultation with the resource teacher or SEN Co-ordinator, on the most effective use of an SNA for a student in the class where relevant • To support/ encourage independence in the student. • To differentiate teaching and learning activities for students, including exceptionally able/gifted students • To assess/ monitor progress. • To consider the needs of students with SEN in all aspects of classroom planning. • To identify students with emergent needs and consult SEN Team • Help implement individualised and specialist programmes and strategies eg L2LP • Direct the work of the SNAs in the classroom • Inform parents of the progress of students through the parent-teacher meeting and school reports. • Contribute to the school subject planning ensuring provision for students with additional needs

Involvement of Parents

Involvement of Students

Parents and the transmission of information

The parents of a child with SEN should provide valuable information to the school in relation to their child's learning difficulties, learning differences, and learning preferences. Sharing of key information is essential to supporting their daughter. The SEN team seeks relevant professional reports from parents of students with SEN with the acceptance of a place in the school. Once they have accepted a place in the school parents are asked to complete a form indicating if student has had educational/medical reports relevant to supporting them in school and if they have previously attended learning support/resource. Copies of SSPs and Irish exemptions are also requested. It is the responsibility of parents to forward relevant reports and documentation to the school.

Parents and home-school links

The school provides parents with regular reports on the progress of their child.

- The school journal is used for weekly/ daily home-school communication, and parent-teacher meetings are held once a year for face to face communication.
- Students receive a written school report twice in the school year (at Christmas and Summer)
- For some students with SEN a differentiated report is provided (School Support Plus).
- Special arrangements may be made with the parents in relation to the homework that an individual student with SEN is expected to undertake.
- Parents help the school by keeping teachers updated of difficulties they observe in their child's learning as they progress through post primary school.

- Student voice is central to planning and support. Students are encourage to identify difficulties they experience and be involved in planning support.
- Students are invited to attend support meetings with their parents where relevant.
- Students are encouraged to flag any difficulties they are having with their class teacher or support teacher, whichever is appropriate. This can be done in person or via Teams.

Special Educational Needs Policy - A Whole School Approach

Provision and the Continuum of Support



Continuum of Support

The model of assessment and intervention, as practiced in Coláiste Muire, is underpinned by recognition that special educational needs occur along a continuum, from mild to severe and from transient to long term. Our response to the needs of students is organised according to NEPS's Continuum of Support.

Student Support Plans (SSP)

All students involved in SEN support will have a learning plan devised by their learning support teacher, with students with more complex needs having a more detailed Student Support Plan.

The Student Support Plan involves:

- Gathering Information: Personal/ Background details.
- General profile based on formal/informal assessment.
- Categorisation of need (assessment reports/ information attained from parents/Relevant documentation)
- Prioritising need as it is not practical or possible to address all areas of need at the same time
- Setting targets for each priority learning need:
- Identifying the strategies and resources required:
- Relevant documentation

These SSP's aim to include the most relevant information in a clear and concise manner so that it functions practically as a working document.

Enrolment

The schools admissions policy is available on the school's website.

PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH KNOWN AND DOCUMENTED NEEDS

Transfer from Primary School

The transfer of information from primary level to post-primary level is vital to the successful support of students with SEN.

Parents of incoming first years with additional needs are invited to attend an information meeting outlining practical supports, structure of learning support and resource teaching hours, pastoral care structures and information regarding Reasonable Accommodations for Certificate Exams (RACE).

Once accepted to Coláiste Muire:

- All first year students will undergo standardised testing in literacy using the PPAD-E.
- At the beginning of each academic year all students on the SEN Register are reviewed individually in terms of level of support needed and curriculum load.

Students transferring into other Year Groups

When a student is accepted into a year group other than First Year, information is sought from their previous school (Educational Psychological report, School reports, attendance, etc) This is the responsibility of the Principal/ Deputy Principal. Parents will be asked to complete a student profile form which will help gather important information. Any relevant information is then passed to the Year Head and the Special Needs Co-ordinator.

PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH EMERGING NEEDS

For students with emerging needs, including the exceptionally able, the concern may have been identified through the whole school screening and monitoring systems (CAT4, in class assessment, informal observation, parental concern). Teachers are asked to complete a referral form for students who they have a concern about that focuses on the student's behaviour, academic performance, homework etc. Some students will need further individual or diagnostic testing to identify the nature of their needs (both learning and behavioural).

Models of SEN provision

In prioritising students for support the following options are considered:

- Curricular differentiation
- Curricular reduction (reduced load).
- Team Teaching/Co-operative Teaching
- In-class support/Differentiation
- Inclusion of SNA in specific classes
- Small group withdrawal

- Individual withdrawal
- Organisation support

The period of intervention recommended for each student is dependent on the nature and extent of their individual need. There are cases where support is needed on a short-term basis, after which the student is in a position to recommence with the regular curriculum.

Resources

The school is allocated a 'basket' of learning support hours each academic year through the General Allocation Model as per Department of Education Guidelines. These are allocated to students based on the identified needs of students. The level of support a student may receive can vary within a school year and from year to year depending on the resources available and the level of identified needs of its student body.

Reasonable Accommodations for State and In House Examinations (RACE)

Applications are made by the SEN Team for RACE provision for students with SEN sitting a Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate Examination. Applications are made in the academic year that the student is sitting the exam and submitted on dates determined by the State Exams Commission.

Exemptions from Irish

- Incoming first years with Irish exemptions are noted.
- Certificates of exemption from the study of Irish must be submitted with the enrolment application.
- The guidelines set down by the Department of Education and Science will be strictly adhered to (Circular 0055/2022). There is a strict protocol for the processing of requests for

consideration for an Irish Exemption and exemptions will only be granted where a student meets the relevant criteria following an evidence based intervention.

- Where possible, withdrawal for Learning Support is arranged for students with SENs, who do not study Irish, during Irish time. This is not guaranteed and is limited by timetable restrictions and staff availability.

COMMUNICATION

SEN Team

- The SEN Team aims to meet formally at a weekly scheduled meeting. Informal meetings occur on a daily basis.
- Members of the SEN team can meet mainstream teachers formally or informally. There may be formal meetings at the beginning of the year between the mainstream teachers and SEN team with regards to incoming first year students with SEN.

Mainstream Teachers

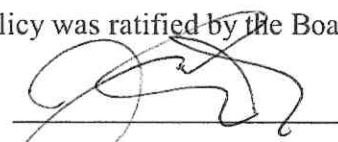
- Each school year, the SEN Coordinator updates a register of information focusing on the incoming first years with SEN. This information is shared with relevant teachers.
- SEN is on the agenda at every staff meeting.
- Information is also communicated via the year head and student support structures such as the Pastoral Care Team.

Record-Keeping

A full record of psychological reports, other reports and records of meetings are kept in the individual students file in the SEN coordinator's classroom/office in a locked cabinet. Student records are destroyed after seven years.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at the meeting on the 7th October 2024 .

Signed: _____

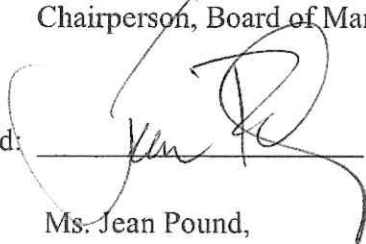


Dr. Joe O'Connell,
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date _____

7th Oct

Signed: _____



Ms. Jean Pound,
Secretary, Board of Management

Date _____

7th Oct