

Special Educational Needs Policy

(Incorporating: Learning Support, Resource Allocation, Special Needs Assistants, Resource Teaching Policy and Assessment and Reporting Policy)

Introduction:

The Commons N. S. is a co-educational mainstream primary school catering for children from mixed social and cultural backgrounds. The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other interested parties on the provision of effective learning support to pupils experiencing low achievement and /or learning difficulties, as well as to fulfill our obligations under the Education Act 1998, Equal Status Act 2000, Education Welfare Act 2000 and Education for Persons with Disabilities Act 2004, to enable children with special educational needs to join in the normal activities of the school along with other children.

Belief Statement:

All our children have a right to an education, which is appropriate to them as individuals. We want all our children to feel that they are a valued part of our school community. As far as possible, it is our aim to minimise the difficulties that children may experience. We are dedicated to helping each child to achieve his/her individual potential. The provision of a quality system of learning support and an inclusive curriculum is integral to this commitment.

We take into account the different backgrounds, experiences, interests and strengths that influence the way in which children learn when we plan our approaches to teaching and learning throughout the school.

Description of current provision:

The school was provided a learning support service in June 1995 as part of a five school cluster. In 2005 it was provided with one base post and a general allocation of 1.00 under the terms of the General Allocation model. In 2012 the allocation was reduced to 0.8. (Sharing a 0.2 allocation with one other school). The school currently has the following provisions to cater for children with Special Education Needs:

One Shared Learning Support Teacher.

One Shared Part-time Resource Teacher.

One Special Needs Assistant.

The following categories of pupils are prioritized to receive supplementary teaching from the Learning Support Teacher and the Resource Teacher under the General Allocation Model outlined in DES Circular 02/05:

Pupils whose achievement is at or below the 12th percentile on standardized tests in English and Mathematics.

Pupils with Learning difficulties, pupils with mild social or emotional difficulties and pupils with mild co-ordination or attention control difficulties associated with identified conditions.

Pupils who have been identified as being in the low incidence categories (Appendix 1 Sp. Ed. Circular 02/05) will receive an individual allocation of support through the Special Needs Organiser. (SENO)

Pupils who have special educational needs arising from high incidence disabilities (borderline mild general learning disability and specific learning disability).

Implementation and Review

The implementation of this policy will be reviewed every three years.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of the Commons N.S. on 31/05/2016. A copy of the policy will be made available to teachers, parents of Special Educational Needs pupils and other parents on request.

Learning Support Policy for The Commons National School

Beliefs and Principles:

'The learning- support service is designed to ensure that all the pupils achieve basic literacy and numeracy by the time they complete their primary education.' (Learning Support Guidelines 2000- pg.14).

The principles of Learning- Support include :

Effective whole- school policies and parental involvement.

Prevention of failure.

Provision of intensive early intervention.

Direction of Resources towards pupils in greatest need.

Aims:

'The principal aim of learning support is to optimize the teaching process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.' (Learning Support Guidelines 2000-pg.15)

Subsidiary aims include-

Enabling these pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level.

Developing positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in these pupils.

Providing supplementary teaching and additional support and resources for these pupils in English and/ or Mathematics.

Involving parents in supporting their children's learning through effective parent- support programmes.

Promoting collaboration among teachers and the implementation of whole- school policies on learning- support for these pupils.

Establishing early intervention programmes and other programs designed to enhance learning and to prevent/ reduce difficulties in learning.

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

To establish early intervention to enhance learning and prevent/reduce difficulties in learning.

To enhance basic skills and learning strategies to a level which enables pupils to participate in the full curriculum.

To expose children to stimulating learning experiences so that reading and writing are enjoyed and valued.

To develop a partnership with parents/carers in order that their knowledge, views and experience can assist us in assessing and providing for their children.

To take into account the ascertainable wishes of the children concerned and, whenever possible, directly involve them in decision making in order to provide more effectively for them.

To inform and include parents of children who are receiving support teaching of the aims and implementation of the learning support programme.

To promote cooperation among teachers and the learning support team in the implementation of the learning support policy.

To ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities towards children with special needs and are able to exercise them.

That all children regardless of their ability are included and are part of all activities and are part of the school community.

Staff roles and responsibilities:

In attempting to achieve the above aims the B.O.M., principal and staff will take all reasonable steps within the limits of the resources available to fulfil the requirements outlined in this policy document and the 'Learning Support Guidelines' 2000.

Board of Management.

The B.O.M. will fulfil its statutory duties towards pupils with special needs. It will ensure that the provision required is an integral part of the school development plan. Members will be knowledgeable about the school's special educational needs provision- funding, equipment and personnel.

Principal

"The Principal teacher has overall responsibility for the school's learning support programme and for the operation of the services for children with special educational needs."(Learning Support Guidelines 2000-pg.39)

The principal teacher's role includes:

Developing and implementing learning –support and special needs services.

Supporting the work of the class teacher.

Supporting the work of the learning- support teacher.

Working with parents, out-of-school agencies and the school community.

Coordinator:

The duties of coordinating learning-support and special needs services will be fulfilled by the learning-support teacher.

Duties include:

Maintaining a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and special educational services.

Helping to coordinate the caseloads/ work schedules of the learning-support and resource teacher.

Supporting the implementation of a tracking system at the whole- school level to monitor the progress of pupils with learning difficulties.

Advising parents on procedures for availing of special needs services.

Liaising with external agencies such as psychological services to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs.

Arranging for classroom accommodation and resources, as appropriate.

Class teacher:

A key element of successful learning- support intervention is a very high level of consultation between the class teacher and the learning- support teacher'. (Learning Support Guidelines 2000- pg.43).

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all the pupils in his/ her class(es), including those selected for supplementary teaching.

The class teacher has a role in:

Developing and implementing the school plan on learning support.

Collaborating with the learning support teacher.

Collaborating with the parents of pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching.

Identifying and supporting pupils with general or specific learning disability.

Creating a classroom environment in which learning difficulties can be prevented or alleviated.

Contribute to developing the learning targets in the pupil's Individual Profile and Learning Programme and adjust the class programme in line with the agreed learning targets.

Differentiate the class curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of all pupils within the class.

Learning Support Teacher:

The role of the learning support teacher includes:

Collaborating with the principal teacher.

Collaborating with the class teacher on the identification of pupils who may need diagnostic assessment, taking into account the pupils' scores on an appropriate standardised screening measure.

Coordinating the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching.

Providing supplementary teaching.

Conducting assessments and maintaining records.

Coordinating provision for children with special educational needs.

Assist in the implementation of whole-school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to prevent learning difficulties.

Consulting and collaborating with the parents of each pupil who has been selected for diagnostic assessment and to discuss results, learning targets and to devise an IPLP and how the targets can be supported at home.

Consulting and collaborating with parents of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching on an ongoing basis and at the end of an instructional term to review pupil's attainment and to discuss future levels of supplementary teaching.

Coordinate the implementation of whole-school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching.

To contribute to decision-making regarding the purchase of learning resources, books and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms, in the school library and in the learning support room.

Liaise with external agencies including NEP's and the regional SENO and organising assessments.

Maintain a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and/or special educational services.

Resource Teacher.

The resource teacher helps to provide an education which meets the needs and abilities of children assessed as having difficulties. Specifically, the resource teacher works with children who have been designated hours by the department of education, or currently the local SENO (Special Educational Needs Organiser). In addition, the resource teacher should advise and liaise with other teachers, parents/guardians and other professionals in the children's interests. More specifically, the Resource Teacher has responsibility for:

Developing an IPLP for each pupil in consultation with other partners in education.

Assessing and recording the child's needs and progress.

Setting specific time related targets for each child and agreeing those with the class teacher.

Direct teaching of the child, either in a separate room or within the mainstream class.

Team teaching and co-teaching when the child concerned will derive benefit from it.

Meeting and advising parents/guardians when necessary accompanied by the class teacher as necessary.

Meeting other relevant professionals in the child's interest.

Keeping a record of all such meetings.

Role of Special Needs Assistants:

Special Needs Assistants form part of the learning support team, along with the Learning Support and Resource Teacher. Their role will be to:

Foster the participation of special needs pupils in the social and academic process of the school and to enable pupils to become independent learners.

To work as part of the learning support team and the wider school community to promote an inclusive curriculum and environment for children with special needs

Be available to work with other children in the school with special needs, apart from the child they have been appointed to

Work closely with the class teacher to develop a plan as how best to support an individual child's needs, for example, physical disability or attention deficit.

Role of the Pupil:

The development, implementation and review of their own learning.

Internal provision:

Prevention strategies:

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

The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to language development eg. Phonological awareness

The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to the Mathematics programme e.g. Math's language

Promotion of parental involvement through attendance at enrollment of incoming Junior Infants

Formal and informal parent/ teacher meetings

School circulars

Ongoing observation and assessment of pupils by class teacher

Early Intervention:

'Research evidence indicates that the implementation of an intensive early intervention programme in the early primary classes is an effective response to meeting the needs of children who experience low achievement and / or learning difficulties.' (Learning Support Guidelines 2000- pg.22)

Strategies for early intervention programmes-

Dividing the school year into instructional terms, each between 13 and 20 weeks

A shared expectation of success by everyone involved

Small group teaching , station teaching, team teaching or one-to- one teaching where small group teaching has not been effective

Intensive in terms of frequency of lessons and the pace of instruction

A strong focus on the development of oral language

An emphasis on the development of phonemic awareness and word identification skills

Frequent supervised oral and silent reading

An interconnection between the nature of listening, speaking, reading and writing

In Mathematics, a focus on the language development and mathematical procedures and concepts.

Ongoing teacher observation and assessment

In infants the 'Belfield Infant Assessment Profile' (BIAP) is administered by the learning support teacher to children who the class teacher feels may be falling behind and then appropriate action will be taken following assessment

The M.I.S.T. (Middle Infants Screening Test) is administered by the Learning Support Teacher to all pupils in Senior Infants after Easter. The results are discussed and analysed by the learning support and class teacher and then the children are grouped for the 'Early Intervention' programme with the learning support teacher and an appropriate programme developed.

Types of instruction:

The learning support teacher decides the size of groups, taking into account the individual needs of pupils and the overall caseload. One to one teaching is provided to meet the needs of individual children. Supplementary teaching can take place in the classroom or in the learning support room, according to the individual child's needs. In keeping with overall literacy and numeracy yearly schemes and planning, team teaching, station teaching and in-class support will be included as forms of support. Lessons will focus on the development of phonetic awareness, word identification strategies, oral work, reading skills and planned reading, comprehension skills, writing skills, spelling skills and mathematical procedures and concepts.

Identification and Selecting pupils for Supplementary teaching.

Criteria for selection of pupils:

Children will be selected to receive supplementary teaching based on -

- a) Results of screening tests (e.g. Micra-T / Sigma-T) to be carried out in each school during the last term of the school year.
- b) Results of Belfield Profiles (B.I.A.P.) Junior Infants (and occasionally senior infants depending on the child's D.O.B.) and M.I.S.T.- Senior Infants
- c) Class teacher's judgment and informal assessment of child's difficulties.

Procedure following selection:

Further diagnostic assessment to be carried out by learning support teacher -

Present tests available -Quest / Neale Analysis /Aston Index / Jackson Phonics /Marino Reading Test/ Schonell Spelling / Single Word Spelling Test/ British Reading Test/ Norman France Mathematics Test/ Computer based ' Maths diagnostic programme, Bangor Dyslexia Test and Belfield infant.

These tests are administered in June or September to children who have been selected for learning support using the criteria listed earlier. These tests may also be administered to other children during the school year, if for example a class teacher expresses concerns about a child's performance or to a new pupil entering the school during the year, if his/her class teacher is of the opinion that he/she may need supplementary teaching.

Recommendations are made for the nature of intervention to be provided to the pupil following the analysis of diagnostic tests and standardised tests administered. This may be in the form of additional support from the class teacher or learning support teacher in a group or on a one to one basis, depending on the child's individual needs. In consultation with the class teacher either a classroom support plan or a school support plan will be drawn up and an individual or group learning programme where necessary.

Consultation with parent to discuss results and written consent before supplementary teaching commences.

Programme Planning:

Based on diagnostic assessment, in consultation with the class teacher and parents, a school support plan, a learning programme and individual profile will be compiled for the pupil.

The learning support programme in literacy and numeracy consists of a range of interventions and the teaching of a selection of different strategies to the pupils experiencing difficulties. The aim of the learning support programme is to optimise the teaching and learning process so as to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy before leaving primary school. The learning support programme is a team effort in which the learning support teacher and the class teachers cooperate with each other, with parents and with relevant outside agencies. We feel it is important to attempt to build up confidence, morale and self-esteem in pupils. Pupils who have a history of failure are given an opportunity to enjoy and succeed in their reading related activities. Due to the differences in pupils' strengths, needs, targets and learning activities as outlined in the Individual Education Plans, it is not possible to adhere to a strict learning support programme

Priority will be given to:

Children who score at or below the 12th percentile on Standardised tests of achievement in English.

Senior infants / First class , early intervention programmes for low achievers in English based on class teacher's observation and supported by standardised tests and / or diagnostic testing.

Children who score at or below the 12th percentile on standardised tests of achievement in Maths.

Pupils from Junior classes (1st -3rd) performing at Sten 4 scores in standardised tests of achievement in English.

Pupils from the Senior classes performing below the 20th percentile in standardised tests of achievement in English.

Pupils from Junior classes (1st -3rd) performing below the 20th percentile in standardised tests of achievement in Maths.

Pupils from Senior classes performing below the 20th percentile in standardised tests of achievement in Maths.

Pupils who are:

- a) pending educational assessment and evaluation by outside agencies e.g. NEPS, Dr. Mc Dyre's team
- b) pending Resource hour allocation
- c) diagnosed as having general or specific learning disabilities or developmental disorders / delays who are not receiving resource assistance.
- d) Children who have had a classroom support plan in place and continue to have difficulty.

When caseload is overloaded, literacy needs will be prioritized over numeracy in cases a child meets the criteria for support in both.

Criteria for reducing/discontinuing support:

Pupil progress will be reviewed /evaluated at the end of a 13/20 week instructional term by informal assessment, re-testing and consultation with class teacher.

If satisfied with progress a review of level of support now required by the pupil will be assessed and a reduction, a classroom support plan and or discontinuance of support will follow.

General Issues:

In the interest of providing an overall effective learning support service within the cluster an effort will be made to restrict the number of pupils to less than 30 in any given instructional term.

Record Keeping:

'The learning support teacher should maintain records of the outcomes of diagnostic assessments, of the agreed learning programmes and of pupil progress.' (Learning Support Guidelines 2000 pg.65)

Records will take the form of

Classroom support plans

School support plans

Individual pupil profiles and learning programmes

Group profiles and learning programmes

Short-term planning and progress records

Liaising with parents:

'Effective communication with parents is critically important to the success of a learning support programme' (Learning Support guidelines 2000 Pg. 48)

Parents are the child's primary educators. Therefore, it is particularly important that there are close links between the learning environment of home and school. A collaborative approach between parents, teachers and others involved in the child's education is essential.

Such communication should take the form of –

Meeting the parents to discuss outcomes of diagnostic assessment

Ongoing communication to discuss progress and/ or difficulties.

Consultation at the end of an instructional term to discuss and review pupil's programmes if necessary

Advising parents on ways they can support their child at home

Links with outside agents:

Name of Service:

Where:

Procedure:

NEPS

Dept. of Education

Parent's consent/ Collaboration

Speech therapy

Health Board

Parent's consent/ Collaboration

SENO

Dept. of Education

Parent's consent/ Collaboration

All communication with outside agencies will be recorded and filed.

Referral to Out of School agencies:

The Learning Support Teacher coordinates the referral of pupils to outside agencies, e.g. Education Psychologist.

The Principal and /or Learning Support Teacher and /or the class teacher will consult with the parents to discuss the need for a referral and to seek consent.

The class teacher and /or learning support teacher completes the necessary referral forms in consultation with appropriate school personnel.

The external professional visits the school to meet the pupil, parents, Principal, class teacher and learning support teacher as appropriate and assessment is conducted.

Findings of assessment are discussed and the recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed.

Selection of Children for NEPS assessment:

At present the school has no assigned psychologist. It has an annual allocation of three psychological assessments per school year based on present enrollment. The school has the services of a

psychologist from the NEPS panel to carry out the assessment. While we haven't the services of an assigned psychologist the school prioritises children to receive assessment by reviewing:

Children who display symptoms of childhood disorders e.g. Autism, ADHD, Language disorders (Low incidence disability categories)

Children who display symptoms of learning difficulties where the level of difficulty experienced by the child could entitle the child to extra support e.g. Dyslexia association, IT support (High incidence disability categories)

Children who have been assessed by an outside agency e.g. Speech therapy, Health Board and an assessment is recommended to secure placement or confirm a diagnosis.

In cases where the number of children needing assessment in the school year exceeds the allocation, the school will discuss the need for assessment with parents and

- a) Recommend the option of a private assessment
- b) Discuss deferring the assessment until the next academic year

Should a NEPS psychologist be assigned to the school the process of selection would be made by making the psychologist aware of the needs of all children in the above categories. Advice will be sought regarding recommendations and further assessment (where deemed appropriate) for children with behavioural and emotional issues.

Communication Strategies:

Information will be communicated between learning support and

Class teacher by- regular informal meetings/ discussion on progress/ sharing records/ test results

Parents by- regular meetings/ parent's day/phone calls

Funding:

The annual Department of Education grants will be used for resources which meet the needs of the pupils availing of Learning Support and with Special Educational Needs within the school. The Testing grant will be used to fund the supply of annual screening tests and investment in future diagnostic tests.

Complaints:

If parents/carers have a complaint about the special educational provision made, then they should in the first instance make an appointment to speak to the learning support teacher or resource teacher and then the principal. The complaint will be investigated and dealt with as early as possible. If the matter is not resolved to the parent/carers satisfaction, then the matter proceeds to the board of management.

Monitoring and Review of policy

This policy will be reviewed every three years

Resource Teaching Policy

Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other relevant persons on the provision of effective teaching support for children experiencing a learning disability or any special needs to fulfill our obligations under the Education Act 1998, Equal Status Act 2000, Education Welfare Act 2000 and Education for Persons with Disabilities Act 2004.

Definition of Special needs:

We understand Special Needs to be that as defined in the Department of Education circulars.

Identification and selection of children with Special Needs:

Concern about children may arise in a number of ways –

Parents inform Principal or class teacher of a concern they have regarding their child.

Teachers may have a concern regarding a child in their class.

Concerns may arise following standardised testing.

Procedures to be followed:

Having consulted with the teacher and parents involved, the Principal will seek appropriate assessment through NEPS with a view to qualifying for support from a Resource teacher.

In a situation where the parents refuse to grant consent for their child to attend for either a psychological assessment or learning support, a record of the offer and its rejection should be kept in the child's file.

Where a parent refuses to give consent the Board may apply to the Circuit court for an order that an assessment of the child to be carried out. (Section 10-5)

The Aims of Resource / Special needs teaching:

The aims of the Resource /Special Needs Teacher are:

To support as far as possible the integration of the child with special needs into the mainstream setting

To develop positive self- esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning for the child

To promote collaboration among staff in the implementation of the whole school policies on special needs

Role of the Resource Teacher:

The role of the Resource teacher is to provide support for the children with special needs by-

Developing an individual learning programmes for each pupil in consultation with other partners in education

Assessing and recording the child's needs and progress

Setting specific time –related targets for each child and agreeing these with the class teacher and principal

Direct teaching of the child, either in a separate room or within the mainstream class in the form of co-teaching

Advising class teachers with regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, text books. I.C.T. and other related matters

Meeting and advising parents when necessary, accompanied by the class teacher as necessary

Meeting other relevant professionals in the child's interest e.g. psychologists, speech and language therapists and visiting teachers.

Timetabling:

The provision of special needs teachers is in addition to regular teaching

Time allocated per child will depend on the demands on the service and the hours authorized by the SENO

Every effort will be made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curricular area each time they attend except where a pupil has been exempted from a subject by the Department of Education

Likewise the school will endeavor to ensure that pupils do not miss classes they particularly enjoy such as Art, P.E. or Computers

Role of Class teacher, Parents, Principal and the Board of Management

The role of the above in the education of children who have been allocated resource teaching is as in the preceding section, i.e. the section on learning support.

Ratified by the Board of Management on 31/05/2016

Signed :-----

Chairperson, Board of Management