

Ballinakill N.S.



Learning Support/ Special Educational Needs (SEN) Policy

Context

Ballinakill N. S. caters for children from Junior Infants to 6th Class and is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Clonfert. The school currently has a Principal, one mainstream class teacher and one shared Learning Support teacher. The school has no Special needs Assistants (SNAs). The allocation of both Special Education Support teachers and Special Needs Assistants is subject to review.

The purpose of this policy document is to provide information to school personnel and parents on how we organise provision for teaching and support of children with special educational needs. The term special educational needs is broad and includes children who have difficulty acquiring literacy and/or numeracy skills, children with difficulties with fine or gross motor skills, children who have English as an additional language (if that impacts on their progress) and children who have diagnosed disabilities.

In this document, SEN can be taken to be special educational needs in this broad sense. The policy is based on Guidelines for Primary Schools: [Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools \(Department of Education & Skills\)](#).

We provide an FAQ document at the end of this policy document to assist in understanding any terms or acronyms.

Aims of SEN Support

Our school is committed to helping our pupils to achieve their full potential. The provision of a quality system of SEN support teaching is integral to this commitment. Through the implementation of our SEN policy we aim to:

- support the inclusion of children with SEN in our school
- develop positive attitudes about school and learning in our children
- ensure that the Staged Approach/Continuum of Support is implemented (see below)
- optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable children with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school (Guidelines for Schools, p15)
- enable children to participate in the full curriculum
- support appropriate differentiation in the classroom
- support children's development both socially and emotionally
- enable children to understand themselves as learners
- involve parents in supporting their children

- promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole-school policies on learning support for our pupils
- promote early intervention programmes designed to enhance learning and prevent/reduce difficulties in learning.

Principles of SEN Support

The provision of SEN support in our school is based on the following principles:

1. Quality of teaching.
2. Effective whole-school policies.
3. Direction of resources towards children in greatest need.
4. Implementation of a staged approach to support provision at Class Support/School Support/School Support Plus levels.
5. Provision of the model(s) of intervention appropriate for the child, including the withdrawal model, in-class support model, individual or group work, etc.

Continuum of Support – Staged Approach

Stage 1. Classroom Support

If a class teacher or parent has concerns about the academic, physical, social or emotional development of a child, the class teacher will then construct a simple, individual plan of support to be implemented in the normal class setting. **This plan will form the 1st instructional page of the child's Continuum of Support** and will be based on screening measures administered by the teacher. The plan will be reviewed after each instructional term (using the Review Page from the Continuum of Support document). If the plan is working well for the child it may be decided to continue with it. If insufficient progress is made and the child is still having difficulty then Stage 2 (School Support) is implemented.

Stage 2. School Support

If further intervention is deemed necessary (after further diagnostic testing by the Learning Support teacher) and the child is to receive supplementary teaching at School Support Level then a letter of consent will be sent to the parents by the Learning Support teacher.

The class teacher and Learning Support teacher then draw up a plan of appropriate learning outcomes for the child. **This plan will form the 2nd instructional page of the child's Continuum of Support** and will be implemented in conjunction with the child's Classroom Support Plan (1st Page). The child's parents/guardians will be informed of this plan, invited to contribute and asked to sign it. This plan will be reviewed at the end of each instructional term and if significant concerns remain after a number of reviews, it may be necessary to involve outside agencies such as NEPS or the HSE. (Stage 3)

Stage 3. School Support Plus

The school may formally request a consultation from other professionals outside the school in respect of children who fail to make sufficient progress after supplementary teaching or the implementation of a behavioural programme, as appropriate. Such professional advice is sought from psychologists, speech therapists, audiologists, occupational therapists etc. This is carried out in consultation with and with the permission of the child's parents/guardians. Following the consultation, the class teacher, Learning Support teacher, parents and outside professional (if available) will draw up a Learning Programme for the child. **This plan will form the 3rd instructional page of the child's Continuum of Support.**

In case of children identified at an early age as having significant special educational needs, intervention at Stage 3 will be necessary on their entry to school.

Support in the classroom will be an essential component of any learning programme devised for such children and primary responsibility for the child will remain with the class teacher in consultation with the designated Learning Support teacher.

Note: The 'Log of Actions' in the Continuum of Support will be added to as appropriate (after a decision has been made or a meeting held). These additions will be made by the Class Teacher or the Learning Support teacher.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of supporting learning is a collaborative responsibility shared by all the school community: The Board of Management, Principal Teacher, Parents, Class Teacher, Learning Support teacher, children and external bodies and agencies.

Board of Management

The Board of Management will:

- be informed of the reviewed SEN policy and any updates to it.
- ratify the SEN policy.
- ensure that satisfactory classroom accommodation and teaching resources are available.
- provide secure facilities for the storage of records relating to children in receipt of SEN support.

Principal Teacher

The Principal Teacher will have overall responsibility for the school's provision for children with SEN. The Principal keeps a record of referrals made to NEPS and other outside services.

The Class Teacher

The Class Teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all children in his/her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching. (Guidelines 2017)

The Class Teacher will-

- provide effective teaching and learning opportunities
- support the identification of learning difficulties
- provide Classroom Support/Stage 1
- log actions in the Support Plan
- communicate with parents/guardians
- draw up Classroom Support Plans (Stage 1 Continuum of Support) "Interventions with children at stages 2 and 3 should include a classroom support plan to ensure that the children's needs are met for the whole school day" (Guidelines 2017 p7)
- collaborate with the Support Teacher in the development of a Support Plan for each child who is in receipt of supplementary teaching at School Support/School Support Plus Level on the Continuum, by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve those targets. A key role of successful support is a high level of consultation and cooperation between the Class Teacher and the Support Teacher. Central to this consultation is the development, implementation and review of support plans. This consultation will be achieved through formal timetabling at least once per instructional term, and through informal consultation as the need arises.

Support Teacher

The central roles of the Learning Support teacher will be to

- a) support the class teacher in optimising teaching and learning opportunities and
- b) provide specialised teaching to those children with identified special educational needs.

Support Teacher responsibilities will consist of both teaching and non-teaching duties.

- Providing supplementary teaching commensurate with the child's particular and individual needs.
- Researching the child's learning difficulty/SEN, to become familiar with their needs and their preferred learning methods.
- Being familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and to meet a variety of needs (Guidelines 2017 p.13).
- Developing a Support Plan for each child who is selected for supplementary teaching, in consultation with Class Teachers and parents.
- Maintaining a Short-Term Plan and Progress Record, or equivalent, for each individual or group of children withdrawn for support teaching. Maintaining a Short-Term and Progress Record (together with the Class Teacher) for in-class support.
- Administering a range of formal and informal assessments and maintaining records of the outcomes of those assessments. This will involve:
 - Conducting an initial Diagnostic Assessment of each child who has been identified as having low achievement and/or a learning difficulty, based on results of an appropriate screening measure and record the findings of the assessment in the child's Support Plan.
 - Monitoring the ongoing progress of each child in receipt of supplementary teaching in relation to the attainment of agreed learning targets and short-term objectives that arise from them, and recording the observations in the Short-Term Plan and Progress Record, or equivalent.
 - Reviewing the progress of each child at the end of an instructional term and recording it on the child's Support Plan.
- Providing supplementary teaching in English and/or Mathematics to children who experience low achievement and/or learning difficulties at School Support/School Support Plus (as per selection criteria). Supplementary teaching will also be provided for child's whose social skills, gross/fine motor skills and English language skills need further development (EAL).
- Logging actions in the Support Plan.
- Delivering early intervention programmes.
- Assisting the implementation of whole-school procedures for the selection of children for supplementary teaching.
- Contributing to the development of SEN policy.
- Providing advice to the Class Teacher (if requested).
- Meeting with parents of children who are in receipt of support teaching where a concern is ongoing.
- Liaising with external agencies such as speech and language therapists etc., and implementing suitable recommendations, wherever possible.

- Implementing school policies on preventing learning difficulties, screening children for learning difficulties, interpreting the outcomes of diagnostic assessments and providing supplementary teaching, where it is deemed necessary.

Role of Parents/Guardians

The central role of parents/guardians of children with SEN is the same as all parents/guardians i.e to support the work of the school and to optimise teaching and learning opportunities for their child at home.

Role of Children

The role of the child with SEN will be that of active participant in their own learning; the extent and nature of this will depend on their strengths and needs.

Role of External Bodies and Agencies

Our school liaises with external professionals such as NEPS Psychologists, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Support Service, the HSE (Health Service Executive), Early Intervention Teams, School Age Teams, Tusla, Visiting Teachers for children with vision impairment, Visiting Teachers for children with hearing loss, and the Inspectorate. We acknowledge that the needs of many children span both health and education services. We therefore liaise with and contribute to health-led assessment and delivery of interventions and facilitate meetings between parents and various support services. We also endeavour to incorporate relevant recommendations from health professionals in developing support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support.

Prevention and Early Intervention

Prevention Strategies

- Differentiation of the curriculum by the mainstream class teacher to cater for individual strengths and needs.
- Development and implementation of agreed approaches to the teaching of English and Mathematics to ensure progression and continuity from class to class, including the Aistear programme and Ready Set Maths in the Infant classes, Guided Reading using the PM Readers from Junior Infants to 2nd class, Reading Buddies from Infants to 6th.
- Careful development of phonological awareness, rhyming skills and oral language skills, before formal reading of words and books.
- The use of concrete materials as much as possible and as appropriate.
- Ongoing structured observation and assessment of the language, literacy and numeracy skills of children in the Infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties.
- Class-based early intervention by the class teacher focusing on the provision of additional individualised support, as and when required.
- Provision of additional support in language development/early literacy/early mathematical skills to children who need it.
- Support for children experiencing social/emotional difficulties and problems with concentration.
- Provision of Assistive Technology as appropriate.

- Promotion of parental involvement through formal and informal parent/teacher meetings.

Early Intervention Strategies

Early intervention programmes may be provided by the class Teacher and/or the Support Teacher, in accordance with the Staged Approach (NEPS Continuum).

Collaboration and consultation between the Class Teachers and the Support Teacher, should identify children who may be in need of early intervention.

Teacher observation and professional opinion will be given due consideration in the selection of children for early intervention programmes at Classroom Support/School Support level.

Early intervention programmes will include –

- Active learning programme for all Junior Infant children with specific emphasis on oral language development, underpinned by the principles of the Aistear programme and the new Language Curriculum.
- Early intervention literacy and language support programme (Guided Reading using PM Readers) in Junior Infant to 2nd classes daily.
- Withdrawal of children to a support teaching room, in-class support, team teaching, group work and individual support will be provided, as appropriate and if it is in a child's best interest.

Identifying and selecting children for additional teaching support

Children with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest level of supports.

Selection criteria

The following criteria will be used by our school to select children for supplementary teaching in line with the new model of Special Education Teaching (Circular 13/2107).

1. Children previously in receipt of "Resource hours" who continue to experience significant learning difficulties.
2. Children scoring at or below the 10th percentile on standardised assessments in Literacy and Maths.
3. Children scoring at or below the 12th percentile on standardised assessments in Literacy and Maths (to allow for a margin of error).
4. Children diagnosed as having Low Incidence Learning Disabilities since 2017.
5. Children diagnosed as having High Incidence Learning Disabilities.
6. Children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) and whose English needs further support.
7. Early intervention in literacy and/or Maths - Infant class children who continue to experience difficulties in early literacy skills, despite interventions made by the Class Teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support. The class teacher will have opened a Support Plan and recorded the interventions in it.
8. Children scoring at or below STEN 4 (30th percentile) on standardised assessments in literacy and/or Maths and who continue to experience difficulty, despite interventions made by the Class Teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support. The class teacher will have opened a Support Plan and recorded the interventions in it.
9. Children experiencing serious difficulties with oral language or social or emotional development or application to learning, despite interventions made by the Class Teacher at

Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support. The class teacher will have opened a Support Plan and recorded the interventions in it.

10. Transition to Post-Primary School. This is also supported by the School Completion Programme.

11. Exceptionally Able/Gifted Children. Interventions will be made in the first instance by the Class Teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support. The class teacher will have opened a Support Plan and recorded the interventions in it. Support from Centre for Talented Youth Ireland (CTYI) is accessed as appropriate.

Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching.

- At the end of each instructional block/term the progress of each child who is in receipt of support teaching will be evaluated following consultation with the child's class teacher and where appropriate, the child's parents/guardians.
- A decision will be made regarding their continued level of support and revised targets will be set in their Support Plan.
- The school may decide to discontinue supplementary teaching with some children when satisfactory progress has been made and targets have been met.
- The school may also decide to discontinue supplementary teaching with some children who are now performing above the percentile laid down in the selection criteria for receiving support; however, if both the class teacher and support teacher feel such a child needs scaffolding to maintain this standard then continued supplementary teaching may be offered if places are available in the appropriate group.

Monitoring Progress

- The Support Review Record on the Continuum of Support will be completed by the Support Teacher in collaboration with the Class Teacher. This will be carried out at the end of each instructional period. The completed review will be saved.
- Self Reflection (by the child) – as part of the Continuum of Support Review Record or SALF (Self Assessment for Learning Folders kept by the children in 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th Classes).
- Weekly Tests if applicable (eg. Spellings/Tables).
- Termly Assessments if applicable (teacher designed or from publishers)
- Standardised Tests at end of year (S. Infants – 6th) English and Maths
- Ongoing structured observation and assessment of the language, literacy and numeracy skills of the children in the Infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties.

Record Keeping

- Class Teachers will keep a record of teacher designed tests, end of term tests and checklists in an Assessment Folder for their class.
- A file for each child in the class is kept in a locked filing cabinet in the office and passed on from teacher to teacher as the child moves through the school. This file contains a

sample of the child's work from September, January and June of each year, parent-teacher meeting notes, Standardised Test results

- Diagnostic Assessments and other checklists administered by the Support Teacher will be put in the child's file in the office.
- Continuum of Support documents for Children with SEN are also kept in the child's file in the office (a copy of relevant pages for the Support Teacher).
- Psychological Reports that are active at any given time are kept in a locked cabinet in the Principal's office.
- Results of Completed Standardised Tests will be filed in the Assessment folders in the office. The Standardised Tests currently used in our school are – Drumcondra Reading and Maths.
- End of Year school Report will be issued to parents/guardians in June. These reports are saved and kept in locked cabinet in Principal's office.
- Monthly Reports from the Support Teacher will be sent to the Principal. These reports outline the work undertaken by the support Teacher with groups or individual children.

Liaising with Parents/Communicating Information

- Class teacher meets with parents/guardians initially to discuss concerns and outline supports available in the school.
- Learning Support teacher and Class Teacher meet with parents to agree a School Support Plan for the child.
- Learning Support teacher liaises with parents of children in receipt of supplementary teaching to demonstrate methodologies that could be useful at home to further the child's learning.
- Parents are encouraged to become involved in their child's learning. Activities are organised throughout the year to support this eg. Reading Buddies, Maths Week etc.
- Parent Teacher Meetings are held in January for all classes.
- An end-of-year report goes home in June each year. Opportunities to discuss this report are made available before the end of term.

Timetabling

- Supplementary teaching that children receive is in addition to their regular class programme in English and Maths, in so far as is practicable.
- Co-teaching, where two teachers work together to plan, organise, instruct and make assessments on the same group of students, sharing the same classroom can operate during English and Maths times in class. If deemed more beneficial to the group being taught by the Support Teacher, they can be withdrawn to a quiet space.
- In so far as is practicable children should not miss out on the same curricular area each time they receive supplementary teaching.
- The Support Teaching Team will review the timetable at the end of each instructional term/block.

Attendance

- An attendance record of children who are withdrawn to the SEN rooms will be kept by Support Teacher.

Monitoring and Reviewing the SEN Policy

- The Principal, Deputy Principal and Learning Support Teacher will monitor and review this policy.

SEN Policy Success Criteria

A whole school approach to the implementation of our SEN policy will:

- ensure that children with SEN gain access to a broad, balanced curriculum and have opportunity of access to an appropriate education.
- develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning among our pupils.
- improve standards of academic performance and achievement.
- enhance parental involvement in supporting their child's learning.
- increase collaboration between school personnel.

The achievement of these success criteria will be assessed through: feedback from teachers, children and parents/guardians; child's achievements and ongoing analysis of children's academic performance and attainment of personal targets.

Acknowledgements

- [Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools \(Department of Education & Skills\)](#)
- "Managing the Transition to the New Model of Special Education" (Dr. Mairéad De Búrca / INTO 2017)
- Circular 30/2014 Special Needs Assistants
- Circular 13/2017 Special Educational Needs – New Model
- <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/a-new-model-for-allocatingspecial-education-teachers-to-mainstream-schools.pdf>

Useful websites:

- Department of Education & Skills: www.education.ie
- National Council for Special Education: www.ncse.ie
- National Council for Curriculum Assessment: www.ncca.ie
- Health Service Executive: www.hse.ie

List of additional documents used in SEN planning:

- Permission to allow access to reports
- Basic Needs Checklist
- Learning Environment Checklist

- Identification of Educational Needs through the Continuum of Support (Overview Page)
- Student Support File (Continuum of Support document)
- Permission for child to attend Support Teaching/Parents' Consent Form
- Permission for teacher to administer screening/diagnostic tests
- SEN Record
- Personal Support Plan

Success Criteria

Indicators of the success of this policy include:

- Improved standards of academic achievement of children with special needs in the school.
- Enhanced parental involvement in supporting their child's learning needs.
- Children with special needs achieve their full potential with the school and society.

Monitoring and Review of Policy

Monitoring of Learning Support/Resource is an ongoing procedure.

This policy has been prepared based on conditions existing in our school at the time of writing. It may be altered, revised or updated at a future date so as to comply with any changes in Learning Support/Resource education in our school.

This policy has been reviewed on 12th February 2024

Ratified on : _____

Signed _____ Chairperson BOM

Signed _____ Principal

Date _____

Date _____

Next Review; February 2026

FAQs to accompany SEN policy

1. What is SEN? SEN means special educational needs. Under the new model of allocation, the term special educational needs is broad and includes children who have difficulty attaining literacy and/or numeracy skills, children with fine or gross motor skills in so far as they impact on the children's progress, children who have English as an additional language (if that impacts on their progress) and children who have diagnosed disabilities. The new model of allocation for SEN teaching provides for appropriate teaching for these children using what is called a staged approach.
2. What do you mean by a staged approach? We take a step-by-step approach to understanding and supporting children who are presenting with a special educational need. There are three main stages and they are outlined in the policy document under the heading Continuum of Support. The Continuum of Support is developed by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and is used in all primary schools.
3. Who decides which teacher works with my child? It is the Principal's responsibility to allocate teachers to classes. The Principal is mindful of the needs of our pupils and the particular strengths and interests of our teachers.
4. Who has access to my child's reports? Professional reports are often provided to the Principal to assist us in planning appropriately for your child. The reports are confidential and are only shared with teachers of your child.
5. Are files stored securely? Files are locked in Principal's office and are secure. It is GDPR compliant (data protection regulations). Teachers only have access to records for pupils in their current class.
6. What is an SNA? An SNA is a Special Needs Assistant who is employed to assist with the care needs of a specific child or children while in the care of the school. The allocation of SNAs is governed by DES Circular 30/2014.
7. What is a Personal Pupil Plan? A Personal Pupil Plan outlines a pupil's special care needs and shows how the SNA will be deployed to assist the pupil. The plan is developed with the parents and teachers of a pupil, and refers to the pupil's support plan (based on the Continuum of Support).
8. Can my child have support from an SNA? If your child has a disability and has care needs please talk to the Principal or Deputy Principal to discuss an application for SNA access.
9. What is NEPS? NEPS is the National Educational Psychological Service and is a service of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and aims to support the personal, social and educational development of all children through the application of psychological theory and practice in education. It has particular regard for children with special educational needs.
10. What is NCSE? The National Council for Special Education. It was set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special education needs. The NCSE is responsible for the allocation of teaching supports and SNAs to support children with special education needs. This is organised locally through Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs).
11. What is HSE and why is it involved in schools? The HSE is the Health Service Executive and part of its duties concern the care and welfare of children. The HSE provides services to children through its Early Intervention Teams, its School Age Teams, its Speech & Language and Occupational Therapy services etc. The HSE also offers vision and hearing screening to pupils in our school.
12. What is a screening measure or test? Screening tests are easy to administer, contain relatively few items, and can be completed in a relatively brief time, sometimes only a few minutes per child. They can be paper and pencil tests, rating scales, checklists or observations of skills/abilities. They are used to alert the school to a possible problem and can be followed up with more in-depth assessment.
13. What is a diagnostic test? A diagnostic test or assessment can provide a profile of a pupil's strengths and weaknesses and can help the teachers develop appropriate teaching plans for the pupil. These plans form part of the Pupil Support Plan.

14.What is a STEN score? Basically a STEN score means a score out of ten. It is used as a marker to compare children's results on a standardised test with other children who took the same test. About 68% of children score between 4 and 7 as this is the average range.

15.What is a percentile score on a test? A percentile score compares a child's test score with other children who took the same test. For example, a child who scores the 60th percentile has done better on the test than children who score 59th percentile or below on the same test. Standardised tests give teachers norms to compare scores with so that we know how children score compared to other children in Ireland taking the same test.

16.What is meant by Low Incidence Learning Disability? Low incidence learning disability refers to disabilities which occur less frequently in the general population. These include moderate, severe or profound general learning disability, significant physical or sensory impairment (eg: vision or hearing), severe emotional or behavioural problems, autistic spectrum disorder, and other diagnosed syndromes.

17.What is meant by High Incidence Learning Disability? High incidence learning disability refers to disabilities which are seen more frequently in the general population. These include specific learning disability (dyslexia) and mild general learning disability.

18.What is EAL? EAL means English as an Additional Language. Teaching supports are provided to children who have English as an Additional Language in so far as it impacts on their educational progress.

19.What is Aistear? Aistear is part of the National Curriculum framework for early childhood education. In our school, Aistear takes the form of structured play-based learning around chosen themes.

20.What is Guided Reading? Guided reading is an instructional approach that involves a teacher working with a small group of students who demonstrate similar reading skills and can all read similar levels of texts.