

# Portumna Community School

## SEN Policy



### Mission Statement

We are a Community School committed to:

- The provision of a comprehensive educational system available to all.
- The recognition and development of each student's social, intellectual, physical and spiritual potential.
- The achievement of high standards in teaching, learning and performance.
- The establishment and maintenance of a co-operative, supportive partnership between school, home and community.
- The promotion of professional development, in-service and support of staff.

### Inclusion

The school makes provision for inclusion of all students including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The following areas are covered in the school plan which is updated regularly.

- The school admission policy
- The school attendance strategy
- The promotion of a school ethos
- Procedures for arranging the transfer of students from primary schools, from other post primary schools and to third level institutions and the world of work.

Inclusion in education refers not only to students with SEN, but also to embracing within the school all students who have learning differences - for example those who are members of the Traveller community, those living in areas of social or economic deprivation, those from other cultures, whose first language may not be English or Irish.

Inclusion does not seek to remove or disregard differences between individuals: in its essence, inclusion implies the right to appropriate education. It aims to enable all students to fully belong to the school community (DES, 2007). From our mission statement it is the policy of Portumna Community School to cater for the inclusion of all students including those with special educational needs. Under Circular No 0014/2017 (CL14/17) a new allocation system has been set up in the school to address the needs of students who need extra support.

This policy has been drawn up in consultation with staff, parents and the Board of Management of the school.

## **SEN Plan**

The SEN team are currently working on reviewing the SEN plan. This details the roles and responsibilities of staff, parents, outside agencies and the Board of Management with regard to students who have special educational needs. It also outlines the different categories of SEN and strategies that can be used to differentiate teaching for these students.

## **Transition from Primary to Secondary**

The early identification of students who have special educational needs is of extreme importance. In line with our special education needs plan the following procedures will take place prior to students commencing at Portumna Community School.

a. Parents will be requested to provide information on special learning needs on the enrolment form. If Psychological reports and any other relevant professional reports are available parents should provide a copy to the school.

b. After enrolment information on all students will be requested from their previous school. Permission for requesting this information indicating results of screening tests will be sought from parents on the enrolment form. All Primary schools should submit student passports prior to transition. If possible previous learning plans should be made available to the SEN team.

c. If Psychological Reports are available which indicate the child requires resource teaching hours and/or learning support the school will allocate support under the new allocation model C14/17 based on need. Special Needs Assistant applications will be made to the National Council for Special Education in conjunction with the Special Education Needs Organiser in line with current circulars from the Department of Education and Skills.

d. Students who are allocated additional teaching hours by the school will be provided with their support through individual, small group and team-teaching interventions. Where appropriate a reduced timetable may be recommended. If special needs assistant hours are allocated the school will decide how to allocate them to the child to address their individual needs.

## **Identification:**

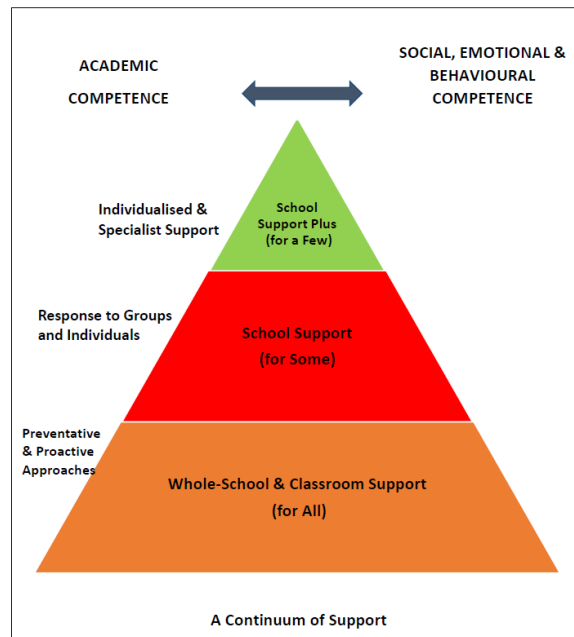
The needs of pupils with special educational needs can best be considered in terms of a continuum and therefore, support given is also on the basis of a continuum.

Portumna Community School follows guidelines set out by NEPS for the continuum for Support post primary.

Stage 1 refers to support for ALL, this is a process of prevention, effective mainstream teaching and early identification.

Stage 2 refers to School Support (for Some), this is an assessment and intervention process which is directed to some students, or groups of students who require some additional input.

Finally, Stage 3 refers to School Support Plus (for a Few) is generally characterised by more intensive and individualised supports. This level of intervention is for students with complex and/or enduring needs and relatively few students will need this level of support.



## Student Support File

Developing a student support file is the outcome of a problem-solving process, involving school staff, parent(s)/ guardian(s) and the student. We start by identifying concerns, we gather information, we put together a plan and we review it. In line with Circular 14/17 when identifying students for support, Portumna Community School considers the following:

- Standardised tests can be used to screen and identify students' performance in reading and mathematics.
- Those students performing below the 10th percentile should be prioritised for support in literacy and numeracy.
- Students who were previously in receipt of supplementary teaching from a resource or learning support teacher and who continue to experience significant learning difficulties.
- Students who are identified as having significant needs through a process of ongoing assessment and intervention as set out in the Continuum of Support Process (DES, 2010). This will be evidenced through school-based assessment of attainment, and behavioural, social and emotional functioning and ongoing monitoring of learning outcomes.
- Schools should also consider needs set out in professional reports, where available.
- Students with mild or transient educational needs including those associated with speech and language difficulties, social or emotional problems, or co-ordination or attention control difficulties.
- Students who have Specific Learning Disabilities.
- Students with significant Special Educational Needs. For example, students with significant learning, behavioural, emotional, physical or sensory needs. These students need additional teaching support because they require highly individualised and differentiated learning programs that are tailored to their needs.
- Students who have additional literacy or language learning needs including those students who need additional English Additional Language Support.

## **Diagnostic Screening and Referrals**

In the first term of the child commencing their education at Portumna Community School a screening test (CAT 4) will be conducted by the Guidance Counsellor and the SEN Coordinator. A reading test (NGRT) will also be administered during the first term. These tests are reviewed and may be used as one form of evidence to establish if a student needs extra support in school in line with the NEPs Continuum of Support.

Portumna Community School follows the staged approach to intervention from the National Educational Psychologist Service (NEPS). If concerns are raised about a student, strategies are first put in place in the classroom by the mainstream teacher who may liaise with the SET teacher for advice and put in place a classroom support plan in line with stage 1 of the NEPs continuum of Support. If this is not successful, the mainstream teacher can refer the student using the SEN referral form (which is available on SharePoint and the SEN noticeboard) as per the SEN plan. The student may receive some learning support and be referred to the SEN department for assessment. At this time the student may be put on stage 2 of the Continuum of support and offered learning support or referred to the SEN department for further assessment depending on these results the student may then be referred for further testing by NEPS or other relevant agencies. Parents can also contact the schools to discuss any concerns they may have regarding their child with the SEN department.

### **Planning for SEN:**

Student support files will be compiled from the Psychological Reports (where available), formal and informal assessments and parent and teacher observations. A Student Support file will be completed using the template devised by NEPS. Input from mainstream teachers, year head, chaplain, guidance counsellor, parents and students may be used to compile the student support plan. It is the responsibility of mainstream teachers to make themselves aware of all students with Special Educational Needs that they teach. To aid in this, a list is made available of all students in the school who require resource or learning support (SEN register, available on SharePoint & Psychological assessments and passports available on request in the DP office, (SSF for all Junior SEN students are being developed this year). Also, the SEN team will disseminate information to teachers as appropriate on an on-going basis. SEN teachers are available to give advice on inclusion and how to differentiate the curriculum for students with SEN to all staff where appropriate. From time to time the SEN department will organize whole staff CPD on relevant SEN's. All staff are encouraged to attend where possible.

### **Educational Planning**

As stated in CL 14/17 educational planning is an essential element of a whole-school approach to meeting students' needs. A student's support plan should include clear, measurable learning targets, and specify the resources and interventions that will be used to address student needs in line with the continuum of support process. Student support plans for students should be developed through a collaborative process involving relevant teachers, Year Head, Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor, Parents/Guardians, the students themselves and outside professionals, as necessary. The individualised planning process should include regular reviews of learning targets as part of an ongoing cycle of assessment, target setting, intervention and review.

The Role of the Classroom Teacher Section 22 (1) of the Education Act 1998 states that the classroom teacher is responsible for educating all students in his/her class, including any student with a special educational need. The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in his/her classroom, including students with special educational needs. It is the responsibility of the

classroom teacher to ensure that each student is taught in a stimulating and supportive classroom environment where all students feel equal and valued.

In line with Continuum of Support Guidelines, the class teacher may gather information through formal and informal means, with a view to informing interventions. The classroom teacher also has a central role in identifying and responding to students with additional needs, including differentiating the curriculum as appropriate. These responses will be informed and assisted by collaboration with colleagues, parents/guardians and others such as the school's NEPS psychologist, and the local Special Educational Needs Organiser. The classroom teacher will also make specific accommodations for students within the class as a result of concerns about a student's progress, application, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers and the development of a programme of differentiated instruction for that student.

### **Additional Teaching Support**

Many children require additional teaching support in schools. In such circumstances, the classroom teacher will be supported by Special Education Teachers, who will have access to additional training in the area of special education, and who will work closely with the class teacher to provide additional teaching support for children with special educational needs. The classroom teacher, in consultation with the Special Educational Teacher as required, will consider ways in which the curriculum can be differentiated or adapted to suit the needs of individual students. This may also involve identifying the most appropriate teaching strategies and programmes to meet the student's needs, and whether additional teaching supports are required. Parents should normally be consulted as part of this process.

### **Curricular Inclusion**

It is the policy of Portumna Community School, to include all students in mainstream classes where appropriate and when it is in their best interest to do so. Where withdrawal is necessary students are removed from Irish (where a student has a certificate of exemption) and non-exam classes where appropriate. Students who have been identified as needing extra support in English and Maths may receive team teaching support. In consultation with the Guidance Teacher, Mainstream Teacher, Special Education Teacher, Parents and Principal a reduced timetable may be recommended and arranged to facilitate learning support (see SEN plan).

### **Gifted Children**

Students who fall within the gifted and talented range are acknowledged. The school will follow the NCCA guidelines in supporting these students. In Line with CI 14/17 additional teaching support can be provided in a variety of ways. The special educational teacher might work in the classroom with the class teacher or withdraw students in small groups and/or individually for a period of time (depending upon the nature of student's needs) for intensive teaching of key skills. The range of teaching supports should include team-teaching, small group teaching and, where necessary, individualised teaching to address specific learning needs. Individualised learning needs can be addressed in a variety of ways and should not be solely equated with withdrawal from class for one-to-one or group tuition. Configurations of team teaching have been shown to provide an appropriate model for engaging with individual needs in the collective setting of the classroom. As necessary, this can be combined with withdrawal for intensive teaching of specific skills, based on level of need.

## **Irish Exemptions**

In line with our Irish Exemption Policy (currently under review) and Department of Education & Skills Circular 0053/2019 parents of students who meet the criteria for an Irish Exemption must complete an application form and apply to the School Principal for the Irish Exemption (and meet the criteria as laid out in said circular). Existing exemptions from the study of Irish granted under Circulars 12/96 and M10/94 and held by students will continue to apply until the end of their post-primary education.

## **Reasonable Accommodations for the Certificate Exams (RACE)**

If a student meets the criteria for RACE within Department guidelines for RACE every effort will be made to accommodate these in our in-house exams (See SEN plan) where possible.

An application may be made to the State Examinations Commission with regard to accommodations for the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate exams.

## **Literacy and Numeracy**

Literacy and numeracy are key areas within the SEN department. Special Education teachers may assess literacy and numeracy of students with SEN. The following are some of the formal assessment tests available to teachers, WRAT IV, WIAT III Teachers edition, NGRT and CAT4 along with informal assessments.

## **Self-Evaluation**

The SEN team are constantly reviewing initiatives it provides and looking for ways to improve the support it offers. Currently this process takes place informally during discussions between members of the team and formally in team meetings. In September during the first subject department meeting the SEN team sets targets that it aims to achieve in the coming year. At the end of the year the team reviews the progress made on goals set previously and any outstanding issues are discussed. (See SEN plan and SharePoint for SEN targets 2019/2020)

## **Policy review**

*This policy was reviewed during the school year 2019/2020.*

*This policy was ratified by Portumna Community School Board of Management on 21<sup>st</sup> of January 2020.*

*The Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis.*