



Grange Post-Primary School
Iarbhunscóil na Gráinsí
windows of opportunity

Special Educational Needs Policy

Ethos Statement

Co. Sligo VEC is a community of learners with an historic and unique tradition as a provider of education and training. In responding to the needs of the community it delivers the highest standards of teaching and learning.

Co. Sligo VEC Colleges, Schools and Centres of Education are democratic, co-educational and multi-denominational in character where policies, practices and attitudes are underpinned by the core values of Respect, Equity and Fairness.

The Board of Management of Grange Post Primary School is publishing this document as the official Special Educational Needs Policy. The VEC as patron of the school has approved this publication. Copies of the policy are available at the school and are furnished to each person who applies to be admitted to the school.

Mission Statement:

Grange Post Primary School is the partnership of Staff, Students and Parents enabling each student to achieve his or her full potential.

We aim to inspire a Love of Learning in all our students, irrespective of ability and through personable and enthusiastic encouragement to lead all on to develop as Caring, Respectful Individuals in a challenging world.

Link to Mission Statement

The Special Needs Department at Grange Post Primary School will strive to give the students male and female, an opportunity to acquire and develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, competence and attitudes necessary to contribute to a personal and family environment conducive to human development, health, leisure, security, and happiness.

To contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual, including aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural, emotional, expressive, intellectual, for personal and home life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure

To enable them, to take their place in the world with the knowledge and ethical attitudes which are imbued in the Mission Statement of our School.

The existence of a Special Educational Needs policy will facilitate the different members of the school community to work together to continue to develop the school and maintain its characteristic vision.

Aims

→ To facilitate integration of students with learning difficulties and physical difficulties into the second-level system.

- To increase access of students with learning difficulties to a greater level of mainstream subjects.
- To ensure that students with learning difficulties have access to state examinations, particularly where special concessions are required.
- To overcome and improve difficulties with literacy and numeracy.
- To boost the self-esteem and self-confidence of students with learning difficulties.
- To promote reading for pleasure and enjoyment outside of school in a positive manner among students with learning difficulties.

Organisation

The Special Educational Needs system will be based on aiding the holistic development of the student, focusing on natural talents and abilities to overcome weaknesses. Early intervention is seen as a key priority to the success of the programme. Resources, activities, content and methodologies will be chosen bearing in mind the need to ensure that Special Educational Needs is a positive experience whereby students enjoy participating in the programmes. Special Educational Needs classes will be organised in such a manner that it creates the least possible disruption to mainstream classes and the progress of Special Educational Needs students in those classes, so as to avoid inadvertently increasing the difficulties these students experience.

Selection Criteria

- Selection will be made based on the results of screening tests in addition to an examination, of students' educational background and consultation with parents, teachers, the Principal and the student themselves.
- Further diagnostic tests may be carried out on individual students where further information is required.
- A withdrawal system will then be operated whereby students will be removed from appropriate classes on a timetabled basis.
- Additional one-to-one classes will be supplied on a very limited basis where a need exists and cannot be catered for in any other manner.

- Duration of participation in the programme is dependant on the progress of the individual student involved. Learning support classes generally end with the completion of the Junior Cycle.
- Selection of students for Resource classes will be made in conjunction with the diagnostic assessments carried out in the school and the Educational Psychologists recommendations. These students will be below the second percentile.
- Selection of students for Learning Support will be based on the results of the screening tests in school diagnostic assessments in consultation with an examination. (See above). Collaboration with subject teachers and the special educational needs teacher in the school.
- Teacher's informal assessments of the child.

Tests Administered and the Testing Procedure:

Whole School Screening

- Screening tests are administered to first years in early September, usually within the first month. Screening tests may be repeated at intervals throughout Junior Cycle as required.
- All tests administered are dated and stored in student files for future reference.
- All screening tests relating to literacy and IQ are delivered by the special needs co-ordinator and the guidance councillor as the people responsible for recording the Special Education Needs in the School.
- Mathematics screening tests are organised by the maths teachers involved and the special educational needs teacher.(SEN)

IQ tests administered as part of the screening process are:

- Non Reading Intelligent Tests or/and
- Drumcondra Verbal Reasoning Tests

Literacy achievement tests administered as part of the screening process are:

- Schonell silent reading test or Graded reading test(Daniels and Diack)
- D young Cloze test
- Graded Spelling test

→ Handwriting speed test

Further diagnostic tests may be administered to individual students where additional information is required to identify specific difficulties and the extent of these difficulties.

All diagnostic testing is administered by the SEN co-ordinator or Guidance counsellor, and recorded by the SEN co ordinator.

Diagnostic tests administered are generally from the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT 3)

Referral Procedure

→ In a case where the SEN teacher feels a child is demonstrating a level of difficulty or other signs that a Specific Learning Difficulty (SLD) or a General Learning Difficulty (GLD) exists, the following procedure is followed:

→ The matter is brought to the Principal's attention.

→ A meeting between the Principal and the parents of the child is organised.

→ Written permission is obtained from the parents.

→ The official referral form is completed and returned to National Education Psychology Service. (NEPS).

→ It is important to note that a lengthy waiting list exists under this system. Therefore, parents' option of organising a consultation with a private Educational Psychologist should be highlighted if they so wish.

Record Keeping and Profiling

→ Confidentiality in regard to all personal documents is a key priority. All written documents will be held in locked filing cabinets in the main special needs classroom. Access to these files will be on a strictly limited basis and only where necessary.

→ Student profiles will include relevant personal information, details and results of tests, in addition to a written record of progress being made in mainstream and learning support and resource classes.

- Student files will also contain copies of any correspondence with parents or outside agencies and tests administered.
- Copies of official reports from educational or clinical psychologists will be requested from parents where they exist and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.
- No additional copies of any personal documents relating to students will be made without parents' permission.
- All copies made will be clearly labelled copies.
- No confidential documents or copies of confidential documents will be sent to outside agencies via e-mail or fax machines.
- Student files will be updated regularly and will be stored in the school for a period not exceeding 7 years after the student's departure from second-level.

Roles of individuals involved in the Special Educational Needs System.

- Screening tests and diagnostic tests are carried out by the Special Educational Needs teacher and Guidance Counsellor.
- Timetabling for withdrawal will be organised by the Special Educational Needs teachers in consultation with Principal and class teachers.
- There will be liaison between Learning Support teacher, Resource teacher, Principal, class teachers, parents and students to complete student profiles.
- Updating of profiles is the responsibility of the particular teacher working with the student involved.
- Drawing up of individual and group learning support and resource programmes is the responsibility of the particular teacher involved. Consultation with class teachers is vital.
- Applications for Irish Exemptions, Special Concessions for Examinations and Resource hours is organised by the Principal in consultation with the SEN teacher, relevant class teachers and parents.

Special Arrangements under the Special Educational Needs System

Irish Exemption

- The school will seek an exemption from Irish for individual students on a very limited basis where the following criteria are met.
- The student fulfils the necessary criteria under Circular M10/94 from the Department of Education. A written letter of request for the exemption, from a parent of a student, must then be submitted to the Principal.
- Once the school is satisfied that the above have been met the Principal in consultation with SEN teacher and class teachers will prepare and forward the necessary documentation to the relevant Government Department.

Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

- A Special Needs Assistant would be applied for on the recommendation of a clinical psychologist or an educational psychologists' report, followed by consultation with class teachers and parents/guardians. An application would then be forwarded to the VEC for assessment. It is envisaged that this would be necessary in a very limited number of cases only.

Resource Hours

- The Principal on behalf of a student will apply for resource hours where the following criteria are met:
- A Specific Learning Difficulty (SLD) or a General Learning Difficulty (GLD) has been identified.
- Where the current Learning Support System is unable to cater for the needs of the student in question due to insufficient time being available.

Special Concessions for Examinations

- Students with significant learning difficulties whom the SEN Department in consultation with School Management feel would benefit from Reasonable Accommodations in State

Examinations will be processed in accordance with the Reasonable Accommodations procedures, as set out by the DES.

- Concessions given may include the use of a tape recorder, a reader and/or a scribe. The school in consultation with the student and their parents prepares applications. Students in receipt of special concessions will be adequately prepared under the Learning Support/Resource System prior to examinations.

Liaison with parents

- On-going liaison with parents is viewed as vital to the success of the programmes.
- Parents are initially required to give written permission before screening tests can be administered.
- Individual meetings with the parents/guardians of all students attending SEN classes can be arranged initially prior to withdrawal and by written notification on an on going basis thereafter where necessary or requested.
- Parents are encouraged to actively participate in their child's educational development and improve student's organisation skills by supporting them as best they can at home.
- Parent's permission is sought prior to applying for or organising any special arrangements or concessions for a student as described previously.
- Regular organised meetings in the form of parent teacher meetings facilitate informal liaison with parents on a regular basis.
- Parents will be firstly encouraged to meet with the SEN teacher followed by school management if the need arises.

Liaison with outside agencies

- Under the SEN arrangements it is envisaged that contact with numerous outside agencies would occur on a regular and on going basis. In particular the following
- The feeder Primary Schools
- The Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO)
- National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS)
- The Dyslexia Association

- The Autism Support Service
- Visiting teachers e.g. Deaf and Downs syndrome
- The Brain Injury Trust
- Social Workers
- Physiotherapists / Occupational Therapists/ Speech Therapists
- Other professionals as required

Facilities and Resources

The school will endeavour to provide the highest quality facilities and resources to facilitate the programme within budgetary constraints.

Facilities will include:

- Adequate rooms available to allow learning support and resource classes to take place.
- Adequate space for an extensive learning support library.
- Adequate and appropriate storage space for test materials.
- A locked filing cabinet for storage of student files.
- An appropriate office room where meetings with parents and outside agencies can take place without interruption.

Resources will include:

- Test materials
- An extensive library to facilitate all reading abilities and interests to promote reading for pleasure and enjoyment.
- Literacy activity work books.
- Spelling resources.
- Phonics materials.
- Language Programme materials.
- IT Software
- It is envisaged that the yearly grant provided for the SEN Department would be sufficient to maintain and update the resources required.

Review and Evaluation Procedures

- Given that the SEN Programme is student centred, the programme must be highly flexible by nature to adapt to current needs.
- Therefore, the programme will be reviewed annually following retesting of new students, to ensure that their needs can be catered for within the existing system. Any necessary changes or adaptations would be arranged as a result.
- Re-testing of students attending SEN classes at the end of each year in addition to consultation with subject teachers can be a tool used to measure the success of the programme and the progress of student involved. However, due to the complex nature of learning difficulties and factors contributing to a lack of progress for individual students such as a high level of absenteeism, it is accepted that the above offer an insight only.

This policy was first formulated in December 2002

Most recent review October 2011