

# **St Munchin's College** **Learning Support and Special Educational Needs** **Policy**

## **SCHOOL PROFILE**

St. Munchin's College is a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School for boys only, operating under the Patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick. As such it supports the religious and educational philosophy of the Catholic Church.

The school is managed by a Board of Management, is funded by the Department of Education and Skills and operates within the regulations and guidelines set down from time to time by that Department. The school has a very active Parents' Council.

It is an institution of learning with a long and noble history, stretching back over 220 years. In this time, St. Munchin's College has indeed seen many changes, both in organization and location; however its dedication to Christian education, sound moral ideals, and high academic standards has not changed.

St. Munchin's College aims, with the resources available, to provide the best possible environment in order to cater for the cultural, educational, moral, physical, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions of all students. We show special concern for the disadvantaged, and we make every effort to ensure that the uniqueness and dignity of each person is respected, and responded to, especially through the pastoral-care system in the school. We realize, too, that we must cater for the changing needs of to-day's world, and, towards that end, we frequently review our various programmes. Being keenly aware of the ever-increasing effect of outside influences on the lives of our students, we are even more concerned to maintain Christian values and practices.

Working together as a school community, the Board of Management, parents, staff and students aim to provide an environment which will allow each student to develop intellectually, physically, morally, socially and spiritually so that he will be able to grow to fulfill his role in society.

Within the context of the Department of Education and Skills regulations and programmes, the rights of the Trustees/Board of Management as set out in the Education Act 1998 (Section 15 (1), (2)), and the funding and resources available, the school supports the following principles :-

- ◆ Inclusiveness, particularly with reference to the enrolment of students with a disability or other special educational needs.
- ◆ Equality with respect to maximum access and participation in the school.

- ◆ Parental choice in relation to choice of school, having regard for the characteristic spirit of the school.
- ◆ Respect for the diversity of beliefs, languages, traditions and ways of life in society.

Any queries arising from the Admissions Policy may be addressed in writing to the Principal of the School (*Mr. David Quilter*) or the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

## **OVERALL VISION**

*“Pupils with special educational needs include all those whose disabilities and/or circumstances prevent or hinder them from benefiting adequately from the education which is normally provided for pupils of the same age, or for whom the education which can generally be provided in the ordinary classroom is not sufficiently challenging. Such pupils have special educational needs arising from their disabilities and/or circumstances and will require Special Education Provision to be made for them”* SERC 1991

This definition is broad ranging and includes all those pupils for whom additional or alternative provisions, services or facilities have to be provided. It includes those with Special Educational Needs as referred to in the Education Act 1998 *“those with a disability and those pupils who are exceptionally able”*

The Board of Management, Parents and Staff of St Munchin’s College are committed to the creation of an inclusive, supportive learning environment for all pupils. We acknowledge inclusive education to mean *“the process of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from the curricula, cultures and communities of local mainstream educational institutions”* (Booth & Ainscow 1998)

The effectiveness of this policy relies on

- whole school policies
- parental involvement
- provision of intensive intervention by committed personnel
- the direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need
- the development of a team approach involving parents, teachers and relevant support personnel such as psychologists and speech and language therapists
- effective communication among all participants involved
- an efficient Transition Programme from primary to post primary school aimed at supporting pupils within the target group
- the provision of appropriate time allocation and support services by the Department of Education and Skills. Learning Support Teacher Allocations and additional resource hours to address pupil’s special educational needs are critical here. Additional support services, (Special Needs Assistants, National Educational Psychological Service, Occupational Therapists etc) are also of vital importance to provide a professional, inclusive service.

## **SCHOOL POLICY ON SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) PROVISION**

SEN plays a significant role in relation to the overall school plan at ST MUNCHIN'S COLLEGE. This is evident in the provision of resources and personnel in providing SEN students with an education suitable to their needs and may be seen throughout this policy document. ST MUNCHIN'S COLLEGE strives to ensure that an education appropriate to their needs is provided for students with special educational needs. Every reasonable effort is made to accommodate students with special needs. Prior to enrolment of student with special needs the Department of Education and Skills may be required to provide the necessary resources – special needs assistant, specialised equipment, adaptation to buildings to facilitate access and transport or furniture as specified in the education Act 1998 Section 7 and in the Admission Policy of St. Munchin's College. While recognizing and fully supporting parents' rights to have a school of their choice for their children, the school's ability to accept students with particular needs is dependent on the supply of resources, suitable to the needs of the individual student, being supplied by the Department of Education and Skills.

### **ADMISSION POLICY**

This SEN policy comes as a subset of the admissions policy and shows comprehensive guidelines in relation to admission and inclusion of all applications in a legal and fair way. It requires all new students to take part in an assessment (ability) test and requires students with Educational, Behavioural or Psychological reports to submit them on application to the school.

### **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### ***Board of Management:***

The Board of Management have responsibility:

- To ensure the SEN and Learning Support Policy is developed and evaluated at regular intervals
- To approve the SEN and Learning Support Policy
- To consider reports from the Principal on the implementation of the SEN and Learning Support Policy

#### ***Principal:***

The principal has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the special educational needs of students are met. To provide for the effective organisation and management of interventions for students with SEN he may convene a SEN support team. A member of the SEN team will be assigned the responsibility of co-ordinating provision of SEN within the school. This co-ordination will liaise closely with the Principal and the SEN team.

### The Principal:

- Assumes overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policies on learning-support and special needs in co-operation with the SEN team
- Works with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan on learning support and special needs
- Monitors the implementation of the school plan on learning support and special needs on an on-going basis
- Oversees the implementation of the assessment and screening programme to identify students with very low achievement and learning difficulties so that these students can be provided with the support they need
- Helps teachers increase their knowledge and skills in the area of learning support
- Liaises regularly with the SEN team/co-ordinator
- Ensure compliance with current legislation and educational initiatives authorised by the Department of Education and Skills
- Set targets and goals for literacy and numeracy attainment under the D.E.I.S. scheme
- Implement the new National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020
- Lead the development of a 'School Improvement Plan' as envisaged in the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020
- Set literacy and numeracy targets so as to halve the number of 15 year olds performing at or below level 1 on PISA literacy and numeracy tests by 2020.
- Ensure efficient transfer of 6<sup>th</sup> class literacy and numeracy standardised testing results between primary and secondary schools

### ***Year Heads:***

All students with SEN will be under the care of an individual year head. It is the responsibility of the year head to liaise closely with class tutors, mainstream teachers and the co-ordinator and members of the SEN team.

### ***Class Tutors:***

All SEN students will be assigned class tutors. The class tutors will have the opportunity to work closely with the SEN students in their care. They will have the opportunity to gather vital information from mainstream teachers and to pass this information into the SEN co-ordinator and members of that team.

### ***Mainstream Teachers:***

Mainstream teachers in ST MUNCHIN'S COLLEGE will have a key role in bringing about the successful inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream schools. Mainstream teachers will have access to all relevant information from the principal and co-ordinator of SEN team to ensure that every effort is made to include that child in his/her class and that all it's educational, social, emotional and physical needs are met. It is encouraged that there is a very

strong link between the SEN team and the mainstream teachers. All information relating to an SEN Child is sensitive and confidential and should be treated as such. Mainstream teachers are an essential link in the Specific Individual Plan (SIP) process.

With regard to teaching students with SEN, the following General approaches and methods are recommended.

- Group teaching;
- Team teaching;
- Modifying presentation and questioning techniques, differentiation, to maximise the involvement of students with low achievement in class activities
- Placing an emphasis on oral language development across the curriculum
- Supporting students in the key basic skills in Literacy and Numeracy
- Acknowledging that the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills in post-primary schools is not just the responsibility of teachers of languages and mathematics
- Setting learning targets at an appropriate level
- Providing learning activities and materials which are suitably challenging but which also ensure success and progress

### ***Role of Special Needs Co-ordinator:***

- Takes a leading role in organising a plan for the student with SEN based on the information available to the SEN team from primary schools, parents, psychological reports and other reports, diagnostic tests etc.
- Provide staff with necessary information to ensure the SEN Child's needs are catered for within the mainstream classroom and school community
- Liaise with outside agencies i.e. SENO, DES, NEPS, HSE, etc.
- Liaises with the Exam Secretary and Guidance Counsellor in making applications for Reasonable Accommodations (RACE) for state examinations
- Facilitate the arrangements of psychological or other assessments as appropriate for students with SEN or who are suspected of having SEN
- Liaise in the management, procurement and maintenance of resources for students with SEN
- Liaise with the principal in keeping him/her informed of the work of the SEN Department
- Provide up to date records of all SEN students in the school
- Be available to the parents/guardian of the SEN Child and establish a supportive relationship with them in recognition that they are the primary educators of their child and know their child best
- Create a general expectation within the school that sensitive information will be handled sympathetically and confidentially

### ***SEN Team:***

ST MUNCHIN'S COLLEGE under the leadership of the SEN co-ordinator will have a core SEN team comprised of all or some of the fully trained Resource and Learning support teachers. This core team will have the responsibility of ensuring that students who enter our school with SEN will have their needs met to the best of their ability. They will liaise with parents, year heads, class tutors, mainstream teachers and other necessary personnel. It is envisaged that this core team will meet twice a week to discuss student's needs and progress.

### ***Special Needs Assistant (SNA):***

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) are allocated to post primary schools to provide care assistance to named students who have special educational needs. SNA posts are allocated currently following applications to the SENO and in accordance with Circular PPT 01/05 and SNA 12/05. SNAs are recruited specifically to assist schools in providing the necessary non-teaching services to students with assessed educational needs. SNAs make a valuable contribution to the capacity of a school to provide inclusive education for students with SEN. SNAs are expected to treat all matters relating to school business and their work in the school as strictly confidential.

### ***Involvement of Parents/Guardians:***

We recognize the role of parents as the primary educators of their children. Therefore, we welcome their involvement in their child's education, whether this is home or school-based. The SEN team liaises with the parents to advise them of their child's needs and how the school is endeavoring to meet these needs.

Parents are consulted and are invited to participate in the making of all decisions of a significant nature concerning their child's education

Such involvement may range from initial contact discussing their child's progress, to discussing specially designed Student Individual Plans (SIP). Contact with parents is on-going throughout the school year.

### ***Role of the Students***

Students who are in receipt of learning support should, as appropriate:

- Become familiar with the medium and short-term learning targets that have been set for them and they should be given the opportunity to contribute to the setting of such targets
- Develop '*ownership*' of the skills and strategies that are taught during learning support and learn to apply these learning strategies to improve their own learning
- Contribute to the evaluation of their progress by participating in appropriate assessment activities, including self-assessment

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS**

### **INFORMATION FLOW MANAGEMENT**

(i) The flow of information between the SEN coordinator and the class teachers, the Year heads, teacher and the Principal.

- a. The SEN coordinator will acquaint the staff annually with policies and procedures of the SEN department
- b. The SEN Coordinator will maintain a list that identifies students who have SEN. This list will be issued to all staff at the beginning of each school year and updated throughout the year, if necessary
- c. Subject teachers should familiarise themselves with the details of any SEN student they teach by liaising with the SEN department
- d. Year Head teachers should liaise, formally or informally, with the SEN co-ordinator to familiarise themselves with details of the Student Individual Plan (SIP) being followed by each SEN student

(ii) The flow of information between the school and the parents of each student with Special Educational Needs

- a. Parents are encouraged from as early as possible to contact the school regarding any special educational need their child may have
- b. Parents are encouraged to pass on any assessment or report on their child's special need, to the school
- c. The SEN department will arrange any meetings which may be required, with parents prior to enrolment and throughout their child's duration in the school
- d. The SEN team will welcome meetings with outside agencies and parents of students new to the school

(ii) Procedures for facilitating effective collaboration between the school and outside agencies such as NCSE, SENO etc.

- a. The SEN coordinator applies for resource hours from the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) during the months of Feb/Mar prior to the students commencing 1st year in the school. A letter is issued by the SENO to the school outlining the number of resource hours available to the school for that year
- b. The SENO is in contact throughout the academic year with regard to new applications, which may be made, or to facilitate the application for grants for equipment
- c. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) undertakes the assessment of students. This is done by referral from the school and from parents
- d. The SEN department welcomes any intervention or advice from specific agencies, where appropriate, depending on the type of disability or special need specific to any student at a given time

## **ASSESSMENT AND REFERRAL PROCEDURES**

### ***Screening:***

Following completion of the Common Application System (CAS), which is the current mechanism of enrolment in the great Limerick Schools area, an information gathering process begins, carried out by the Principal and Deputy Principal and assisted by SEN Co-ordinator. Each of the local feeder schools is visited, information is gathered on each student and students that may have SEN requirements are identified. In March/April all students sit a series of Assessment Test (CAT IV and NGRT).

### ***Diagnostic testing:***

Once the screening tests are completed and assessed an understanding of individuals' potential, attainment, learning styles, and most effective teaching methods for individual children are attained. Additional reading, attitudes and maths assessments are carried out in September/October on all students in 1<sup>st</sup> year to further identify the students who have literacy and numeracy difficulties as well as those with exceptional ability.

### ***Informal Observation:***

In relation to identification, if a student is not already assessed and has a specific learning difficulty, this should become apparent on entry when the spelling and reading tests are administered in relevant classes. If at this stage a problem is identified, further testing is done. If a problem persists or seems to be serious enough to warrant a psychological educational assessment, then the SEN Co-ordinator will arrange for National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) to be called in. If a teacher detects a problem in a student further up the school, he/she will inform the SEN coordinator and relevant testing will be done.

### ***Reasonable Accommodations:***

Reasonable Accommodations for Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate students with SEN is made to the DES by the SEN Co-ordinator/team in consultation with the Exam Secretary & Guidance Counsellor.

### ***Referral to outside agencies:***

The school may refer to outside agencies from time to time as needed. For example, a visiting teacher for a student with a hearing impairment, the NEPS psychologist, speech and language therapists, Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) etc.

## **PROVISION**

The provision of learning support is seen in the context of a whole school approach. The SEN team provides information to subject teachers in relation to students that may require supports. Teachers not trained in SEN also can be asked to take individual or small group classes. A specialist teacher, i.e. a practical teacher, is an invaluable resource to a student struggling with a subject in that area.

The aim of each teacher and our school is to “develop the individual student to his full potential”. In addition to this:

- The Special Needs Team will endeavour to provide appropriate levels of support for students as part of the whole school approach
- Students with learning difficulties will be withdrawn in small groups of four or less where the timetable permits
- Support teachers may offer learning support in the classroom through team teaching or teacher in-class drifting
- The Special Needs Team under the direction of the Co-ordinator will be available to Year Heads and Subject Teachers to advise on particular learning difficulties and suggest strategies for the classroom
- A student with special needs may be exempt from the study of certain subjects. This will occur following consultation with parents/guardians

The College is allocated additional teaching hours by the Department of Education and Skills on the basis of psychologist reports submitted to the Department in the academic year preceding the year of entry of a student. The College may not be in a position to allocate additional support, to exempt students from certain subjects or withdraw students from normal class where no such report has been completed and submitted in good time.

The level of support provided to a student with special needs will be based on the resources allocated from the Department of Education and Skills for that student and on an assessment of the needs of that student undertaken by the Special Needs Co-ordinator.

Parents/guardians should be aware that where a student is withdrawn from a class for the purposes of special needs support it will not be possible to make good all of the topics missed as a result of absence from the class.

## **MODELS OF DELIVERY**

In assessing and deciding which students need to be in receipt of supplementary teaching and which students may benefit from support within the mainstream context the following options are considered:

- Individual withdrawal
- Small group withdrawal
- Inclusion of SNA in specific classes
- Curricular reduction
- Team Teaching
- Drift Teaching
- Library Literacy/Numeracy initiatives
- NBSS interventions

## **TIMETABLING OF RESOURCE PROVISION**

### ***Irish Exemptions/Modern Language Waivers (Junior Cycle):***

Every effort will be made to accommodate a student with an exemption from Irish or foreign languages. However it may not always be possible to withdraw a student from these classes if trained personnel are not available at this time to provide resource/learning support teaching. Students may have to remain in some of these classes.

### ***Withdrawals:***

The SEN department may withdraw students from other subject areas in consultation with the respective subject department and with parents' permission. In some cases students with SEN may be on reduced timetables to facilitate their Special Education Needs.

### ***Transition Year/LCA:***

It is not normally the case that students avail of resource/learning support hours during their Transition/LCA years. This is done in consultation with parents/guardians. However, all Transition/LCA teachers are made aware of their students' special educational need.

### ***Senior Cycle:***

At Senior Cycle Resource support decreases but is still available according to resources allocated.

The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) is recommended for students whose learning needs would not be met by the demands of the traditional Leaving Certificate. In instances where an SEN student chooses LCA it is generally accepted that the curriculum itself supports the student and thus specific SEN provision may not be necessary but can be made available if required. Students who have exemptions may be accommodated with extra literacy / numeracy classes. However where it is apparent that additional support is necessary for an SEN student, this will be reviewed on an individual basis.

## **PLANNING FOR SEN PROVISION**

### ***Staff Meetings:***

Throughout the year there are a number of staff meetings where set time is placed on the agenda to discuss students with SEN, especially at the beginning of the year. Their needs, difficulties and disabilities are discussed and information in relation to the nature of these is made available to all teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff as appropriate.

### ***SEN Team Meetings:***

It is envisaged that the core SEN team meet twice a week to discuss SEN students and to plan for their needs.

## **APPEALS**

### ***Admission:***

The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse an application for admission to St Munchin's College.

The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse an application for admission in exceptional circumstances, e.g. where a student poses an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of the students and staff of St Munchin's College and/or to St Munchin's College property or where a student may present with such a degree of special need that even with additional resources provided by the Department of Education and Skills, St Munchin's College would not be able to reasonably accommodate the student concerned under **Section 29** of the Education Act.

Final confirmation of a place may, in exceptional cases, have to be withheld until the Department of Education and Skills confirms that the necessary resources are to be allocated.

### ***Review and Appeal Procedures:***

Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 provides for an appeal process to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills. In general such an appeal must be made within 42 days of the notification of refusal by the school

*The Parent(s)/Guardian(s)' of any student who is refused admission may appeal the decision within seven days of such refusal.*

## **DOCUMENTATION AND RECORD KEEPING**

Access and storage system

All records are confidential in relation to any student including students with SEN's. The SEN Coordinator holds specific records in relation to SEN students in a cabinet in the main

school office, with access being made available to all teachers that require information on a particular student.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

Teachers are informed of any specific Health and Safety issues relating to individual SEN students.

## **FUTURE OBJECTIVES**

1. To continue raising teacher consciousness of students' need for learning support and resource teaching.
2. To empower teachers, through professional development opportunities and regular assistance from the Learning Support Staff, NEPS or other relevant professionals, to meet the needs of the great diversity of pupils with special educational needs found in our mixed ability, mainstream classes
3. To review the communication channels available to inform staff members of the increasingly diverse range of pupils with special educational needs who join our school community.
4. To encourage all teachers involved in the provision of resource teaching to participate in professional development in this area.
5. To further engage the participation and support of parents in the learning process.
6. To use Transition Year as a vehicle for the development of giftedness or special abilities..
7. To revitalise the use of a school library as a method of improving literacy levels.
8. To further expand the peer support programme in which senior pupils act as tutors, mentors and friends to junior pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities.
9. To further strengthen links with the National Educational Psychological Service and other support professionals or agencies to support the school community.
10. To devise a coherent strategy to maximise the support offered by Special Needs Assistants.
11. To continue to develop the IT provision in the school as an effective tool for learning support.
12. To empower pupils with Special Educational Needs to voice their own concerns and be proactive, working with the school to address these concerns.

## **CONCLUSION**

SEN provision in ST MUNCHIN'S COLLEGE is a developing, dynamic and evolving process. ST MUNCHIN'S COLLEGE will be very proactive in regard to staff development and resource provision but as we enter an uncertain era in our countries economic status, it is now more than ever that we learn to apply and adapt our resources and staff to continue to provide students with the education they will require for life.

We have many strengths but it can take only a few weaknesses to leave even one child behind. Differentiation, timetabling and social inclusion need to be built upon to ensure this doesn't happen.

## **REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed every two years or more frequently depending on the legislative changes which are ongoing in this area.

*Ratified by the Board of Management 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2016*

*Review Date – October, 2018*

*Signed:*

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