

**SPECIAL
EDUCATION
NEEDS
POLICY**

Chairperson of the Board of Management.....

Principal.....

Date.....

RATIONALE

Corran College welcomes all students to of school regardless of ability.

We endeavour to do our utmost to help every student with special needs, including physical disabilities, learning disabilities and /or gifted students, to reach their educational potential within constraints of resources granted to us by the Department of Education and Science (DES)

We believe that the maximum possible level of integration and inclusion of students with special educational needs into mainstream classes should be encouraged and facilitated. Students should be enabled to make choices and decisions by proving them with an accepting environment that celebrates diversity and individuality while recognising the value of peer learning and group interaction.

We recognise that all students have individual needs and that these must be catered for by a whole-school approach to curricular planning and innovative, flexible and varied teaching methodologies.

We believe that a flexible multi-disciplinary approach to special education involving teachers, parents and a variety of professionals is paramount but that the student must remain at the centre of the educational process and be an integral part of decision making which may affect his/her educational and welfare with the school.

Recognising our diverse and multi-cultural society and so our diverse student body, we endeavour to insure that students whose first language is not English are supported to the degree that they have minimum access to subject areas and examinations and are fully integrated into our student body.

TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY

The transition from primary to post-primary is a challenging time for all students. As such Corran College has procedures in place to ease this transition.

A transition programme is made available to primary pupils after Christmas in their final year of primary education. Primary students are brought into Corran College after school one evening per week and provided with tutoring in a variety of subjects such as IT and Art. This provides an enjoyable medium, whereby students become accustomed to the layout of the school and the facilities available in a non-stressful manner.

Parents of students with special needs are encouraged to contact the school at their earliest convenience. This provides an opportunity for the Principal and parents to assess the needs and explore all means of providing support to the student. This is seen as particularly important where an SNA or resource hours have been provided in primary school so that this can be arranged and in place on their entry into Corran College. Parents of SEN students are invited to visit the school on a regular basis and arrangements are made for SNA's to meet with the student and parents before September. Any relevant information will also be requested from the feeder primary school including any medical conditions, learning difficulties, educational history and if an educational psychological assessment was carried out.

Similar information will also be requested by the Principal for any student transferring into the school from another post-primary school as per our admissions policy.

If psychological testing has taken place the Principal will request permission from the parents/guardians of the student to obtain a copy of the assessment. This assessment will be stored and utilised as per recording procedures outlined later in this policy.

Our Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO) will also visit homes of students to establish and maintain links with families and later to involve parents in their children's education by organising paired reading programmes, 'Maths for fun@' etc.

Our pastoral care system also including class tutors, guidance counsellor and SPHE teachers are also seen as having a vital role in easing the transition from primary to post-primary for all students.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Our policy is that students with special needs are responsibility of **all members of staff**.

Our school operates a mixed ability policy for all classes and subject areas based on our key principals of inclusion and integration. The consequence of this that all class groupings contain SEN students. Therefore, each subject teacher has overall responsibility for all students attending their classes, including SEN students.

Management play an important role in supporting and encouraging SEN students. Also in timetabling, submitting of application for Irish exemptions, special concessions for examinations, resource hours, SNA's and organising the involvement of any other professionals whose expertise may be required.

Class tutors play a role in teaching, supporting and encouraging students.

We welcome Special Needs Assistants (SNA) into our classrooms and appreciate the valuable support they provide to students with special needs.

Resource and Learning Support teachers have a special role in teaching and supporting SEN students, designing targeted, structure and specific learning programmes around the needs of students in conjunction with subject teachers and maintaining written records of progress made by students.

The Learning Support teacher also has the specific role of carrying our testing of students (refer to testing procedures).

Implicit in the principals underpinning our Learning Support system is a high level of liaison between all of the above parties.

CLASS GROUPINGS

As previously stated our school operates a mixed ability system for mainstream class.

Within classes subject teachers must cater for the needs of all students. However, where special needs exist that cannot be catered for within mainstream classes, students are withdrawn to attend classes under the resource/learning support system. Where resource hours have not been allocated, selection for Learning Support is made on the basis of screening tests in addition to consultation with class teachers, parents and the students themselves.

Students who are experiencing mild/borderline difficulties in literacy and or maths will be closely monitored and their progress reviewed regularly to identify if there is a need for additional support.

The number of classes a student will be withdrawn from will vary depending on their needs.

Students will be withdrawn in small groupings (max 4 students) to facilitate maximum progress and minimum disruption to mainstream classes.

One-to-one classes will be supplied on a very limited basis where a need exists.

Duration of participations in the learning support/SEN programme is highly flexible and is dependent on the progress and needs of the student concerned.

KEY SKILLS TO BE PROMOTED IN ALL SUBJECTS PLANNING FOR SEN STUDENTS

Given that our approach to special needs is a whole school approach, it is vital that key priorities are clearly identified that should be incorporated into subject planning for all subject areas as well as learning support/resource classes.

The following are a list of the key skills identified as promoting and enhancing lifelong learning for SEN students that will be reinforced across multi-disciplinary areas:

- **Enabling Skills** – including responding to and interacting with people and our environment, social interaction, group activities, understanding, collecting and organising information i.e. leading towards independent learning.
- **Life Skills**- including communication skills, personal and social skills, aesthetic and creative skills, physical skills, basic mathematical skills.

These skills will be reinforced frequently and their relevance in real life situations stressed.

KEY LEARNING AREAS TO BE INCLUDED IN SUBJECT PLANNING FOR SEN STUDENTS.

While the learning objectives to be incorporated into subject planning are to be designed by each subject teacher, there are specific learning areas that have been highlighted by the NCCA as vital to the learning experience of SEN students and where possible teachers are encouraged to include them in their individual **planning** for SEN students.

The following are the key learning areas identified:

- **Communication and language:** communication is an essential element of the education of students with special needs. Including functional oral language development of a sight vocabulary, the ability to read for meaning and functional writing skills. Meaningful written work may involve the use of IT.
- **Mathematical studies:** incorporating a wide range of knowledge and skills that help students to develop an understanding of the physical world and social interactions. Exploring and solving problems and use of 3 -D materials etc. Also, managing money, reading timetables and using functional mathematics.
- **Scientific, technology, social, political and environmental education:** including a variety of subject areas that help students to develop a sense of place and space. By exploring their physical and natural environment students can come to understand their place in the world. Thematic and sensory approaches helpful.
- **Social, Personal and Health Education:** intrinsic to all areas of the curriculum. Involves fostering personal development and helping students to recognise, understand and accept themselves as unique and multi-faceted individuals who are loved and valued. Self-worth and self-confidence will be nurtured and the role of others in their lives appreciated.
- **Physical Education:** as well as developing the body's strength and well-being, physical activities provide opportunities through which students can improve fine and gross motor co-ordination, concentration, listening skills, self-esteem, self-confidence, and the ability to co-operate and communicate with others.
- **Art Education:** in a mainstream setting, art education provides a non-threatening collaborative experience where students can enjoy a more inclusive educational experience and interact fully with their peers.

OTHER KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SUBJECT PLANNING FOR SEN STUDENTS

The following are to be implemented and encouraged in subject planning for all students with SEN in line with SEN policy principles:

- Take into account the students in question and provide relevant, age-appropriate content, methodologies and approaches that address present and future needs of students
- Utilise differentiated choice and organisation of content tailored to student's needs
- Use IT as a learning tool appropriately where writing difficulties exist.

- Incorporate appropriate time – referenced learning objectives using individualised learning programmes where necessary.
- Use appropriate forms of assessment and evaluation of progress that stress the unique strengths and needs of students.
- Assessment for Learning (AFL) techniques are encouraged e.g. comment only marking
- Progress, however small, must always be rewarded. All teachers are encouraged to issue rewards on a regular basis to students with learning difficulties who are putting effort into learning. At the graduation ceremony a merit award is given to a particular student who has put in great effort as opposed to the highest results.
- Ensure language used is pitched at the student's level.
- Pose key questions to guide students through the learning process.
- Create a learning environment through the use of concrete and where possible everyday materials, and by displaying work lists and laminated charts with pictures/symbols as opposed to all text.

LITERACY ENHANCEMENT

In addition to reading skills being stresses as a key area to be incorporated into subject planning of every subject, a paired reading programme is organised every year between a senior group (usually LCVP1) and first year. Students are paired based on reading ages/abilities, i.e. weak paired with strong reader, and is seen as beneficial to both groups. Reading material is available from the library and varies in levels of difficulty from low difficulty to very high difficulty to allow for the full range of reading ages. It is timetables during 1st year English and is followed up on with book review and activities in class. A resource teacher is also on hand to monitor and aid with any difficulties that may arise. A paired reading programme involving parents is run separately by the HSLO.

INFORMATION SHARING WITHIN STAFF

Special Education/Learning Support will be on the agenda of all regular staff meetings and development days. This will give teachers an opportunity to share concerns or offer insights they may have with regard to the abilities, learning profile or progress of specific students. The focus of these discussions will be on methods of helping students in difficulty in a positive manner. Any discussions about students will be carried out in a sensitive, caring and professional manner.

The first staff meeting of the year will be considered of particular importance in relation to students with special needs to generate possible learning profiles of new students from information gathered through admissions, particularly to highlight e.g. hearing impairment or visual impairment.

By the end of September each year following screening of first years a “dissemination of information” meeting will be requested to identify students to be withdrawn, in need of additional support in classes or to be closely monitored for the moment. It will also offer an opportunity for teachers to share information they may have on students learning styles having taught them for a month.

It is expected that informal meetings between learning support/resource and class teachers in relation to SEN students would occur on a regular basis throughout the year, particularly between English teachers and resource teachers.

Teachers will meet at interval for scheduled meetings to review IEP's of specific students as necessary. In the case of a student with a IEP, teachers will be given a set of guidelines specific to that student to help in drawing up learning objectives and will have access to the IEP folder as a reference if needed on request. Due to confidentiality IEP's are stored securely in the main office.

Liaison with parents

Ongoing liaison with parents is viewed as vital to the success of the learning Support Programmes.

- Parents are initially required to give written permission before screening tests can be administered.
- Individual meetings with the parents/parent/guardian of all students attending learning support classes are arranged initially prior to withdrawal of the student and on-going basis thereafter where necessary or requested.
- Parents are encouraged to actively participate in their child's educational development, in particular a shared reading programme and improving students' organisation skills through various interventions at home.
- Parents' permission is sought prior to applying for or organising any special arrangements/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.

Liaison with outside agencies

Under the Learning Support System, 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
- National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS)
- The Dyslexia Association
- Social Workers

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 office and copies in locked filing cabinets in the Learning Support office. Access to these files will be on a strictly limited basis and only when 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 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 up-dated regularly and will be stored in the school for a period not exceeding 7 years after the students' departure from second-level.

Tests Administered and the Testing Procedure

Whole School Screening

- Written permission to carry out a range of screening tests is obtained from parents prior to testing
- The screening tests are then administered to first years in September, usually within the first two weeks.
- 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 and recorded by the learning support teacher (Miss Kinsella).
- Mathematics screening tests are organised by the maths teachers involved.
- CAT 4 tests are carried out with all 1st Years, 2nd Years and 3rd Years.
- The NGRT is carried out with all first years at the start and end of the year so that progression can be monitored.
- WRAT 4 Maths computations are carried out with first years at the beginning and end of the year.

Diagnostic Testing

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

All diagnostic testing is administered and recorded by the learning Support teacher.

Diagnostic tests administered are generally from the Aston Index of Diagnostic Tests.

Referral Procedure

In a case where the Learning Support teacher feels a child 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 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.

Facilities and Resources

The school will endeavour to provide the highest quality facilities and resources to facilitate the Learning Support 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 success with shared reading programmes.
- Literacy activity workbooks.
- Spelling resources.
- Phonics materials.
- Language Programme materials.
- IT Software.

It is envisaged that the grant provided for Learning Support yearly would be sufficient to maintain and up-date the resources required.

Special Arrangements under the Learning Support 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.
- The individual students level of difficulty in mainstream classes in literacy would be more beneficial than to master a second language.
- A written letter of request for the exemption, from a parent of the student, is submitted to the Principal.

Once the school is satisfied that the above have been met the Principal in consultation with learning support and class teachers will prepare and forward the necessary documentation to the relevant Government Department.

Exemptions from other class subjects

Application for exemptions from various class subjects requires a written request from the parents of the individual student. It is envisaged that the granting of such exemptions would be on a very limited basis and only where it is clearly evident that the student's educational needs would benefit from the exemption in question. The Principal in consultation with class teachers, parents and the student, will determine this.

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. An application would then be forwarded to ETB 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 who would be prevented from achieving their educational potential in written examinations due to Learning Difficulties (SLD or GLD) are entitled to the option of obtaining special concessions under the departments new RACE guidelines 2017.

- Concessions given include the use of a tape recorder, word processor, 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.

Review and Evaluation Procedures

Given that the Learning Support 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 testing 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 Learning Support classes at the end of each year in addition to consultation with subject teachers offer can be a tool used to measure the success of the programme and the progress of students 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.