



# Special Educational Needs Policy

October 2016

**The Board of Management has published this document in line with the Admission and Participation Policy for Coláiste Cois Siúire. The patron, Kilkenny and Carlow ETB, has approved this policy. A copy of this policy is available at all times at the school and is furnished to each person who applies for admission to the school.**

## **Rationale**

Coláiste Cois Siúire seeks to provide a caring and committed environment where all partners are actively involved in helping our students fulfil their potential. This partnership aims to foster the holistic development of all our students in a supportive, safe environment of mutual respect, which develops the uniqueness of each student.

Coláiste Cois Siúire welcomes all students for whom the school can provide an appropriate education including those with special educational needs.

## **Scope of the Policy**

This policy applies to all students attending Coláiste Cois Siúire and those who have special educational needs. The students who fall under the remit of SEN support fall under two broad categories: low incidence and high incidence students.

The specific exceptionalities catered for to include:

- Learning support students
- Borderline/Mild General Learning Disability
- Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties –ADD/ADHD
- Specific Learning Difficulty – e.g. Dyslexia
- Sensory difficulties (hearing and visual impairments)
- Physical difficulties – e.g. Dyspraxia
- Moderate General Learning Disability
- Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorder

## **Policy Statement**

This policy is drafted in the context of the specific provisions and definitions with regard to children with disabilities and special educational needs, the statutory requirements placed on schools and Boards of Managements by:

- The Education Act 1998
- The Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
- The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004

This policy is drafted in the context of guidelines published by the Special Educational Needs Support Service.

This policy is drafted in consideration of the Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill 2003 as well as guidelines on Individual Education Plan Process 2006.

## **Aim of the Policy**

As set out in The Education Act 1998, The Education for Persons with Special

Educational Needs Act 2004 and The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004 Coláiste Cois Siúire aims to

- Give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children who have a disability or who have other special educational needs, as they relate to education.
- Provide, as far as is practicable and having regard to the resources available, a level and quality of education appropriate to the needs and abilities of all students in the school.
- Ensure that students with special educational needs are educated in an inclusive environment, as far as possible.
- Affirm that students with special educational needs have the same right to avail of, and benefit from education as students who do not have those needs.
- Provide for the involvement of parents in the education of their children and in the decision making process in relation to their children.
- Co-operate and work closely with the National Council for Special Educational Needs (NCSE) and other agencies with regard to the education of students with special educational needs.
- Ensure that students with special educational needs are identified and provided for in a fair and equitable manner so that their learning potential and their sense of self worth and dignity is developed and respected.
- Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the special educational needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.
- Ensure that special educational needs are not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.
- Ensure that students with special educational needs are offered a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Set high standards for students with special educational needs and provide them with appropriate guidance, encouraging them to achieve to their full potential.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support from home.
- Co-ordinate the advice, guidance and support of other agencies in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Ensure the effective and efficient use of resources.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of practice in support of students with special educational needs

## **Admission and Participation by Students with Special Education Needs**

The school welcomes and encourages students with disabilities and special needs to enter the school and to participate in all curricular and extra-curricular activities on offer and to the extent that such participation will not endanger their own safety or that of others. The school will, as far as resources permit, provide special treatment and facilities to enable them participate in the life of the school, unless to do so would give rise to excessive costs that the school could not reasonably be expected to bear.

## **Enrolment of Children with Special Needs**

In relation to applications for the enrolment of children with special needs the Board of Management will request a copy of the child's medical and / or psychological report or where such a report is not available, will request that the child be assessed immediately. The purpose of the assessment report is to assist the school in establishing the educational and training needs of the child relevant to his / her disability or special needs and to profile the support services required.

Following receipt of the report, the Board will assess how the school can meet the needs specified in the report. Where the Board deems that further resources are required, it will, prior to enrolment request Kilkenny and Carlow ETB to make representations to the Department of Education and Skills to provide the resources required to meet the needs of the child as outlined in the psychological and / or medical report. These resources may include for example, access to or the provision of any or a combination of the following: visiting teacher service, resource teacher for special needs, and special needs assistant, specialised equipment for furniture, transport services or other.

The Principal / designated staff member will meet with the parents of the child to discuss the child's needs and the school's suitability or capability in meeting those needs. Where necessary, a full case conference involving all parties will be held, which may include parents, Principal, learning support teacher, special class teacher, resource teacher for special needs or psychologist, as appropriate.

It may be necessary for the Board of Management to defer enrolment of a particular child pending:

- The receipt of an assessment report, and / or
- The provision of appropriate resources by the Department of Education and Skills to meet the needs specified in the psychological and / or medical report.

## **Transfer from Primary School**

Prior to entry to Coláiste Cois Siúire the Principal & Home School Liaison Coordinator visit the feeder Primary Schools. The school sees this liaison as an important step in ensuring proper identification of students with special educational needs and the continuity of provision for them. Where possible, visits are arranged for students and their parents with special educational needs prior to their transfer to Coláiste Cois Siúire. Information received from the Primary Schools and parents coupled with the results of the Standardised Tests from Sixth Class and assessments tests held prior to entry into Coláiste Cois Siúire, help the school identify those students who may need additional support at post primary level.

Coláiste Cois Siúire has been involved in piloting for two years, a new model for the allocation of teaching resources for children with special educational needs. The new model is based on the profiled need of each school, and without a requirement for students to require a diagnosis of special educational needs just to access additional teaching supports. The new model provides a fairer and more equitable distribution of special needs teaching resources in line with the recommendations of the NCSE

All teachers and other members of the school community are briefed by the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Coordinator at the start of each school year on matters relating to the students they are going to teach or come into contact with. Clearly the extent to which individual teachers are given confidential information is a sensitive matter. It is however important that teachers have as much information as possible regarding the students they teach if they are to contribute towards the best possible learning environment for them.

### **Students transferring into other Year Groups**

When a student is accepted into Coláiste Cois Siúire to join a year group other than First Year information is sought from their previous school. The Principal/Deputy Principal are usually responsible for this. This information is passed on to the SEN Coordinator and all other relevant personnel.

The school's resource allocation is student dependent and is variable on an annual basis.

### **Role of the Principal**

Under current legislation the Principal of the school has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the special educational needs of students are met.

The principal

- works with the board of management, teachers and parents in the development, implementation review of whole-school policies that promote the inclusion of students with special educational needs
- ensures that all such policies are described in the school plan
- monitors the implementation of whole-school policies and provision for special educational needs
- consults and liaises, as required, with relevant external bodies and agencies, such as the Department of Education, the National Education Psychological Service, the National Council for Special Education, the Health Service Executive and local agencies

The principal has delegated several functions concerning the practical organisation of the provision to the Deputy Principal and the SEN Coordinator.

The principal

- ensures that mainstream teachers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the education of students with special educational needs
- facilitates the continuous professional development of all members of the staff in relation to the education of students with special educational needs
- promotes the involvement of the parents of students with special educational needs, by inviting them to share information and consulting them how this information be used in the best interest of their child

## **Role of the SEN Coordinator:**

The SEN Coordinator is responsible for the overall co-ordination of Resource/Learning Support within the school. The SEN Coordinator duties are as follows:

- Assists with arrangements for the successful transfer of students from their primary school to Coláiste Cois Siúire and in gathering information about students, including those with special educational needs, before this transfer.
- Co-ordinates SEN provision in the school
- Liaises with parents/guardians of SEN students and prospective students
- Liaises with NEPS psychologists regarding assessment of priority students
- Communicates with relevant staff regarding essential information regarding SEN students
- Provides updates and details of all matters SEN to the School Authorities
- Liaises with the SENO in relation to all matters SEN including; assessment reports, learning support/resource provision, SNA access and applications to the NCSE
- Maintains and updates SEN files
- Makes application for Reasonable Accommodation to the SEC
- Processes Exemptions from Irish
- Liaises with the School Authorities regarding timetabling
- Strives to develop a climate of confidentiality regarding the sensitive information of all the partners involved in SEN
- Liaises with school management regarding specific and whole school professional development.

## **Reasonable Accommodations (RACE)**

The SEN co-Coordinator, in consultation with Care Support Team, identifies those students in need of reasonable accommodation in school and state examinations. Psychological reports that recommend reasonable accommodation for certain students must be acted on and applications forwarded to the 'Reasonable Accommodation' section of the State Examinations Commission.

In-school assessment will continue to be administered to those students identified as potential candidates requiring reasonable accommodation. Applications for reasonable accommodation will be made for those students that meet the criteria necessary for additional supports.

## **Liaison with outside Agencies**

The Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) liaises closely with the SEN Coordinator and facilitates the delivery and co-ordination of educational services to children with SEN. The SENO also processes application forms for resources for SEN Students to the NCSE and advises parents/guardians regarding their son's/daughter's needs.

The National Psychological Service (NEPS) provide psychological assessments of students and recommendations on how best to address strengths and weaknesses identified. The service also advises

as to how best employ resources and strategies in the classroom, and school environment in general, to benefit SEN students.

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provides support for students experiencing difficulties of an behavioural/emotional nature and provides advice and recommendations on how best to address those difficulties in a school environment.

Other Agencies include, but is not exhaustive, the Health Service Executive (HSE), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the Special Education Support Service (SESS)

### **Role of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA)**

The Special Needs Assistant provides care assistance to named students who have special educational needs. They make a valuable contribution to the schools capacity to provide inclusive education to these students.

The Special Educational Needs Department devises an appropriate strategy plan for a student with special educational needs. The SNA takes care of the implementation of this plan.

The Special Needs Assistant plays an important role in the health and safety of the student and in their social, emotional and educational development. It is important that the Special Needs Assistant supports student participation in school life without developing a culture of dependency.

The duties of the Special Needs Assistants involve tasks of a non teaching nature such as:

- Attending both Staff and Departmental meetings when appropriate.
- Assisting / escorting students on school trips.
- Giving special assistance as necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. helping special needs students with typing, writing or other use of equipment.
- Assisting with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene and being mindful of health and safety needs of the student.
- Assisting with reading/scribing examinations (if appropriate).
- Assisting the teacher in the supervision of pupils during assembly and in movement from one classroom to another.
- Accompanying individual or small groups who may be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom.
- General assistance of the subject teacher of a non-teaching nature. Special Needs Assistants may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class.
- Participation with school development planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school development process.
- Engagement with parents of special needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required.
- Other appropriate duties as may be determined by the needs of the pupils and the school. Special Needs Assistants may be re-assigned to other appropriate work when special needs students are absent or when particularly urgent work demands arise.
- Special Needs Assistants are expected to treat all matters relating to school business and their work as strictly confidential

## **Role of the Teacher**

The class teacher has a key role in bringing about the successful inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream classes. The class teacher has primary responsibility for the educational progress of all students in his/her class. It is particularly important that all class teachers create a classroom environment that accommodates and takes account of learning and physical difficulties. Whether students are taught in mixed ability or streamed classes it is expected that teachers will implement differentiated approaches for teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that the skills of all students including SEN students are catered for.

Class teachers will make themselves aware of the special educational needs of students in their classes. A profile of all pupils with a psychological assessment is made available to all teachers at the first staff meeting of the new school year and is available through the SEN Coordinator on request. Teachers take steps to inform themselves of the special needs of any student in their classes and to bring any concerns regarding such a student to the SEN Coordinator.

The class teacher also plays an important role in the early identification of students with SEN. The class teacher is alert to the possibility of general and specific learning difficulties and brings their concerns to the attention of the SEN Coordinator or a member of senior management. A key element of successful SEN provision is a high level of consultation and co-operation between the class teacher and the SEN Coordinator and Care Support Team. A class teacher, form teacher or Year Head can refer any student they are concerned about to the SEN Coordinator, who will begin a broader profile. This first step in the screening process allows the SEN Coordinator and other relevant parties to identify the nature of SEN being experienced. It is during this time that the learning, emotional, behavioural and social needs of the student are evaluated. The Coordinator will gather all the relevant information and after consultation with school management, the parents and the pupil may apply to the NCSE for support.

The academic progress of students throughout the school rests in the first instance with the mainstream class teacher. In order to ensure that as a school we meet the needs of all our special educational needs students, all teachers are encouraged to:

- Be aware of the School's policy and procedures for dealing with students with special educational needs.
- Seek advice from the SEN Coordinator regarding students with special educational needs.
- Take responsibility for their continuous professional development particularly with regard to common difficulties e.g. Dyslexia.
- Develop an attitude of ownership to the education of students in their classes with Special Educational Needs.
- Where a student has an SNA the subject teacher should plan how to most effectively engage the SNA in consultation with the SEN Coordinator.
- Support/encourage independence in the student. This is particularly important for Senior Cycle students.