



# Stratford College

Co-educational Secondary School

## Special Education Needs Policy

13<sup>th</sup> September 2013

### Scope of Policy

The Special Needs policy applies to the whole school and encompasses identified special needs students, parents, teachers, departments, subjects, class work, homework and study.

### Mission and Vision

At Stratford College we strive to develop a safe, inclusive and supportive environment, which will enable each member of the school community to realise his/ her full potential.

### Legal Context:

- Education Act (1998): *A recognised school shall provide education to students which is appropriate to their abilities and needs and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, it shall, as far as resources permit, ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with special educational needs, are identified and provided for...*
- Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004):  
Definition of Special Needs: *... A person who has special educational needs, ... defined as a restriction in the capacity of the child to participate in and benefit from, education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition.*

### Rationale

Ensuring that all special needs students are included and receive the optimum educational experience is the stimulus for the creation of this policy on Special Needs.

## Objectives of this policy

- To ensure an inclusive learning environment for students with special needs
- To explain how students with special needs may have access to learning support and resource
- To maintain a line of communication between parents, staff and students
- To identify, plan, monitor and review SEN students

## Policy Content

### Aims

- To adopt cohesive and inclusive practices that help us embrace the differences within the student body
- To ensure all students maximize their individual potential
- To outline a team approach for all staff involved (Subject Teachers, Form Teacher, Special Needs Assistant, Psychologists, School Counsellor, Learning Support & Resource Teachers, School Management)
- To develop and hone inclusive teaching strategies within the classroom (e.g. differentiation) to enable pupils with Special Educational Needs and Learning Difficulties to share with their peers as complete an educational experience as possible
- To outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to pupils with special needs
- To outline our whole school approach to teaching/learning in relation to pupils with special needs
- To establish communication structures for the involvement of parents of pupils with special needs
- To integrate all students socially and academically within the school environment

### Inclusion

At Stratford College we strive to ensure that students of all levels and abilities may access the curriculum through our Special Needs Program.

- Differentiation allows students of all abilities to access, participate in and benefit from the educational provision within the programs and resources available
- Special Needs Assistants are assigned to provide appropriate care to students in their charge. They are utilized sensitively, to ensure that no stigma is attached
- Students are identified, lessons are differentiated and work is monitored by subject teachers as part of ongoing support and/or resource provision
- Consultation is ongoing between subject teachers, resource teachers, form teachers, students and the management team (Principal and Deputy Principal).
- In-class support is assigned on a case by case basis.

### **Withdrawal from class for:**

- Learning support (in small groups or one-to-one support for students who do not fall in the lowest 10<sup>th</sup> Percentile but require assistance in literacy and numeracy)
- Resource (includes small groups and one-to-one support for students with Specific Learning Disabilities who fall below the 10<sup>th</sup> Percentile with a psychological assessment and resource hours are granted)
- Withdrawal from specific classes is reviewed after each term in order to reintegrate the student(s) back into the classroom environment
  
- Withdrawal classes are decided by the resource teacher in agreement with students, parents and the Principal.
- Withdrawal choice is reviewed regularly

### **Counselling and Psychological Support by the Care Team**

- Counselling is provided, including support around personal difficulties, career advice, subject choice advice, pastoral care, study techniques and goal setting
- The Care Team comprises those members of staff with relevant contact with the student
- Educational Psychological Support is provided through NEPS or privately
- Care Team meetings

### **Role of the Board of Management**

- Oversee development of Special Needs Policy.
- Ensure that teachers and staff are informed of students who have a special educational need.
- Provide professional development for teachers in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Ensure adequate accommodation and resources.
- Provide secure facility for storage of records.

### **Other Supports**

- Learning Support teacher has weekly meeting with school Principal
- Extra-curricular sports activities are open to all and encourage inclusion
- Differentiation occurs within subjects to encourage participation of students in class
- Varied methodologies are encouraged and supported to include all students
  - Using concrete materials
  - Group work/ Paired work

- Differentiation of class/ homework methodologies
- Additional tutorial work provided for students
- Information on student needs is shared through a file in the Resource Office which is available to relevant teachers and SNA
- Recommendations and strategies are shared as needs dictate
- In-service has been provided (e.g. Brain Injury Support, NBSS, Epilepsy Ireland)
- Access to Support files available in the resource room and the Principal's office
- IEPs – Individual Education Programmes are drawn up annually for resource students who have been identified with needs. These are reviewed on an ongoing basis.
- Communications with NEPS and Lucena on a needs basis

### **Enrolment of children with Special Needs (See Enrolment Policy)**

- The school operates an open enrolment policy and, within the schools capabilities, attempts to meet the needs of all students who apply
- Meetings are arranged between parents/ principal/ class teacher
- Inclusion is embraced
- Copies of appropriate academic and medical reports, assessments etc. are requested where they are deemed relevant to the educational welfare of the student.

### **Identification of Learning Needs**

- The school requests psychological reports from parents on registration of their child to Stratford College.
- Application is then completed to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) through the local Special Educational Needs Officer (SENO) requesting appropriate resources to support the students identified as having a Special Educational Need.
- All primary school reports are also requested. If assessments cannot be found through primary schools, the counsellor requests that this be done before the child leaves 6<sup>th</sup> class.
- In September, attainment tests take place for first year students, carried out by the Learning Support teacher.

### **For students who arrive to Stratford College without prior assessment:**

- Class teachers / subject teachers may raise concerns about students during the year. Class work, Progress Reports and teacher concerns may give rise to referrals for assessment. This is an ongoing process that includes the whole school, the parents and the student.

- The Learning Support Teacher will carry out tests to establish a Sten score in literacy & numeracy to inform on whether the student should be further assessed. When this is done, parents will be requested to give permission to follow through with a Psychological Assessment.

### **Learning Support Students**

- Students are identified from information gathered from Primary Schools and diagnostic tests, class tests and observations. Learning Support is put in place depending on the needs and difficulties identified and on the resources available. The purpose of Learning Support is to focus on Curriculum Support.

### **Parental Support**

- Discussion regarding the outcome of Psychological Assessments takes place between parents and the psychologist. Implementation of suggested strategies is then discussed with the school Learning Support teacher or school management.
- For resource students, IEPs are devised in collaboration with teachers, parents and students themselves.
- The school facilitates parents wishing to discuss the needs of their child by appointment with relevant care personnel.
- The school identifies the parameters of facilities available in Stratford College in line with the resources provided by the NCSE and the Department of Education.

### **Intervention Programmes**

- Provision of Support Teaching

### **Who provides support teaching?**

(Role of the class teacher/ resource teacher/ learning support teacher/ visiting teacher)

- The school has a Learning Support teacher who provides learning support to students who have scored below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile for IQ testing. It is also offered to students who have not been assessed but are deemed to be in need.
- Access to a visiting teacher for those students with hearing / visual impairment is facilitated.
- Students are allocated to Resource Teachers for resource hours.
- The school has a Resource Teaching Team which works with students who create IEPs and implement programs for students with assessed difficulties.
- EAL is also offered to non-national students whose English is weak.

### **What type of support teaching is provided?**

(One to one, small group teaching, intervention in the classroom)

- Learning Support offers one to one and small group assistance.
- Resource offers withdrawal from class of small groups and one to one assistance.
- EAL offers extra English classes to students in small groups on a weekly basis.
- SNA Support provided in the classroom where students face particular challenges.

### **Where does intervention take place?**

- Resource teaching and Learning Support take place in our dedicated resource room or another available room.
- EAL takes place in a room on the school premises on Friday afternoons.

### **Communication**

#### **Between class teacher and parent...**

- Parent teacher meetings are held annually.
- Individual meetings may be arranged with parents of SEN students where it is beneficial to discuss progress and/or concerns.
- School Reports are sent out twice yearly.
- Progress Reports are sent out twice yearly.

#### **Between class teacher and learning support teacher...**

- This is facilitated through the care team meetings.
- Through requested SEN meetings during the year.
- Learning Support teacher is available to advise or research issues as they arise.

### **Professional Development**

- Professional development is encouraged in all areas.
- Literacy and numeracy strategy currently under review.

### **Roles and Responsibility**

- At Stratford College it is expected that all teaching and support staff have a duty and responsibility to address the Special Needs of students

## Success Criteria

Practical indicators of the success of the policy:

- Pupils with special needs are included into all areas of our school environment
- Participation in class
- Ability to complete assignments and tasks
- Feedback from teaching staff, special needs assistant, pupil, psychologists
- Improvement in results of class tests over time

## Monitoring Procedures

### How is the pupil's progress monitored?

All teachers will monitor students' progress e.g.

- The resource team will monitor whether specific targets set out in the IEP have been reached.
- The Learning Support teacher will monitor whether goals for students have been reached.
- Subject teachers also monitor progress through observation and class tests.

### How is the pupil's progress recorded?

- IEPs record specific targets and progress of SEN students.
- Class teachers will also keep a record of progress during class tests.
- Resource and Support teachers also record progress on a termly basis in progress reports.
- Learning Support teacher records material covered in one to one classes.
- Learning Support teacher has regular contact with parents/guardians to inform on progress. This occurs through phone calls and meetings

## Record Keeping

Files containing all the relevant information pertaining to the pupil with special needs are kept and safely stored in a locked cabinet in the Resource Room.

- The Resource Team, School Counsellor, Psychologist and subject teachers have relevant access to the students' files.
- Files are stored in secure facilities within the school.
- Files and information are stored for 7 years.
- The file is updated by the Resource Teacher, Principal, Psychologist and, on certain occasions, class teachers.

## Reviewing Procedures

### How/When is the plan reviewed?

#### When:

- The plan is reviewed on a term by term basis. Depending on the targets set, it may be reviewed twice yearly.

#### How:

- Teacher observations are considered when reviews are carried out.
- A series of tests are carried out to determine level of literacy and reading age.
- Students will be asked to assess whether they have met their own targets, giving them responsibility for their own goals and achievements.
- Parents may also be consulted in regard to assessment of progress.

### How often are intervention programmes for pupils with special needs reviewed?

- Needs-based reviews occur as new information emerges.

#### Timeframe

- Decide upon a date from which this policy will apply. Monitoring the implementation of the policy is ongoing and will be trialed until full ratification of the board.
- Upon ratification by the Board of Management, the Policy shall remain in place for a period of 3 years, although annual updates may occur.

In consultation with staff, Parents Association and Student Council.

Approved by the Board of Management:

**Chair of the Board** Mr Cormac Murphy Date: 20 May 2013

Mr Alan Green **Trustee**

13/9/13



## Appendix

### **Explanatory Note re Allocation of Resource Hours**

Stratford College is a small mainstream secondary school where teaching and learning is provided in a mixed ability setting; the majority of our students take higher level subjects. The size of our school restricts our ability to offer alternative programmes or ordinary level classes in the majority of subjects. In the allocation of resource hours the Board of Management (BOM) is mindful of its legal obligations, its financial limitations and its commitment to the broader curriculum.

Our annual resource hour allocation is provided through a combination of differentiation, team-teaching, one- to -one teaching or small group teaching (**see over for definition of terms**).

Support can only be provided on a regular basis when a student is exempt from a particular subject or subject option subject to the availability of relevant teachers. Most of our students want to participate in the full curriculum thus intermittent support is provided for students who are not exempt from a subject. Consultation with parents of students with special education needs is held prior to enrolment and registration and, again, at the commencement of the new academic year, following the receipt of our resource allocation (July).

Parents should also be aware that due to the nature of a second level school it may not be possible to timetable the same teacher with a student.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **Allocation**

*The model of organisation adopted in a particular school is determined to a significant degree by the number of students with special educational needs in the school **and the level of resources available**. These factors also determine to a great extent how resource teachers should carry out their role. The core task of resource teachers is teaching students, whether this is done one-to-one, in small groups, in special classes, or through co-operative teaching with colleagues. DES Guidelines 2007.*

Resource hours are applied for by the school on behalf of individual students and are approved by the NCSE following strict criteria and subject to available national resources. Currently, the allocation of these resource hours by the DES does not represent a net addition to our staffing quota from the DES. If a student does not enrol in the school these hours are withdrawn. Following recent government educational cutbacks our provision of resource hours is mainly managed in small groups settings as outlined below.

Should it not be possible for the school to allocate resource hours from within its quota the BOM may approve any additional school expenditure incurred or advise the parents concerned accordingly, with due regard to the financial constraints of the Board. Any such recommendations will be examined on a case by case basis.

### **Differentiation**

Differentiation in teaching means to distinguish between individual learning styles or learning needs of students. This is usually done within a class by a subject teacher varying his/her teaching and assessment methodologies. Differentiation can also be delivered through alternative programmes, level of subject (ordinary or higher level), subject choice (the provision of minority subjects at senior cycle).

### **Team teaching**

The Guidelines on the provision of special education at post primary level (2007) and the N.C.C.A. documents on the same topic (2006) recommend the provision of support within the regular classroom. Team teaching occurs when two or more teachers jointly deliver instruction to a diverse group of students in a single physical space. (Cook and Friend, 1995: 1). The term “co-operative teaching” is used here to denote any arrangement whereby two or more teachers work together in a collaborative manner with a class of students who have diverse learning needs. Within the classroom and in the context of the inclusion of students with special educational needs, the “teaching team” will typically be made up of the mainstream teacher and either the resource teacher or the learning-support teacher. The members of the teaching team share responsibility for the planning and provision of instruction to the class. The resource teacher and learning-support teacher usually pays particular attention to students with special educational needs or those with low achievement and endeavours to ensure that these students experience success in their learning programmes. A negative feature of team teaching is that having two adults in the one classroom can emphasise the differences between pupils with special educational needs and their classmates.

### **Withdrawal**

Withdrawal means providing **one- to- one** or **small group** teaching for students with SEN by withdrawing them from some of their optional or free classes. **Optional subjects for junior cycle in Stratford College may include Business, Classics, Art and Science and some students may be exempt from the study of Irish).** This is possible subject to the availability of relevant teachers and may result in either enhanced parallel teaching of the subject in question or a restricted timetable. Some of these classes may also be scheduled before/after school. Under this arrangement, students with special educational needs are withdrawn from mainstream classes for individualised or small-group teaching, often in the areas of literacy, mathematics, or social skills training. A positive feature of a withdrawal arrangement is that it provides for an individualised or small-group setting in which the specific needs of the student can be addressed. A negative effect is that the separation of a student from their classmates tends to emphasise for the student, his/her fellow-students and members of the staff the differences rather than the similarities between the student with special educational needs and their classmates and so may counter other measures that have been adopted to include the student fully in the school community. Withdrawal also means that the

student misses the work being covered in the mainstream class for certain periods. It is often difficult for the school to find alternative opportunities for the student to make up for the classes they have missed.

### **Individual Education Plans (IEP)**

IEPS are drawn up in consultation with students, parents and in consideration of clinical recommendations (i.e. educational, psychiatric, occupational, speech therapy etc) by the teacher(s) in question.