



Policy on Special Educational Needs

Ratified at BOM Meeting on 12th of February, 2020

Signed Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed Principal

Date

Date of next review

1. Introduction/School Context

Rush and Lusk Educate Together National School is a mainstream primary school catering for children from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds. The enrolment in the school year 2019-2020 is approximately 450 children, spread across two classes at each level (16 classes in total). We currently have no designated class for children with additional needs, but in the planning for our new school building (scheduled for completion in September 2021) there are two ASD classes with all associated facilities. The school has a team of nine Special Educational Needs (SEN) teachers and nine Special Needs Assistant (SNA) posts.

2. Guiding principles

We endorse the six principles from the Guidelines for Schools Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (DES 2017):

1. Resources provided to support children with Special Educational Needs will be used to facilitate the development of a truly inclusive school.
2. Supports provided to children are based on identified needs and are informed by regular reviews of progress in consultation with parents and the children themselves.
3. The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all children in the classroom, including those with special educational needs.
4. SEN teaching supports are used to support children with identified special educational needs, including children for whom English is an additional language.
5. The children with the greatest levels of need will have access to the greatest level of support, and where possible, these children will be supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.
6. A core SEN team has been established in order to meet the needs of children with special educational needs. These teachers are encouraged to engage in CPD to ensure that they have the necessary expertise to support a diverse range of needs.

3. Aims of SEN support

The ethos of the school is to provide a caring, child-centred and secure environment, where the needs of all children are met to the best of our ability. We strive to minimise the difficulties that children may experience, enabling them to experience success in learning and to achieve as high a standard as possible.

The aims of our SEN provision are therefore:

- to identify those children who would benefit from additional support;
- to support the inclusion of children with SEN in our school, enabling them to participate in the full curriculum wherever possible;
- to assist children in developing positive self-esteem and a positive attitude towards learning;
- to enable children to monitor their own learning, and become independent learners;
- to promote collaboration among teachers in implementing the school policy on SEN;
- to provide supplementary teaching and additional support in literacy, numeracy and other relevant areas;
- to ensure that the staged approach outlined in the NEPS Continuum of Support is implemented;
- to establish early intervention programmes to enhance learning and reduce difficulties in learning; and
- to involve parents in supporting their children's learning and development.

4. Equality of Access

The school aims to meet the needs of any child whom the parent/guardian wishes to register at the school as long as a place is available and the admission criteria are fulfilled. The Education For Persons with Disabilities Act 2004, states that "A child is entitled to attend the school which is most suited to his or her overall needs".

Parents are required to notify the school of any relevant Special Educational Needs on the Enrolment/Admissions form. No child will be refused admission solely on the grounds that s/he has SEN unless the provision required is incompatible with that available in our school.

We recognise that a minority of children will have particular learning and assessment requirements that will create barriers to learning. When we plan our approaches to teaching and learning, we take into account the different backgrounds, experiences, interests and strengths that influence the ways in which children learn. We take all reasonable steps to fulfil our aim of inclusiveness.

5. Prevention and early intervention

5.1 Prevention

Our strategies to minimise learning difficulties include:

- the development of agreed approaches to the teaching of English and Mathematics (see **Appendix 1**);
- a focus on phonics, phonological awareness and rhyming skills before the introduction of formal reading;
- use of concrete materials wherever possible in mathematics;
- careful observation of literacy and numeracy skills of children in infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties;
- collaboration and consultation between class teachers and the SEN team; and
- provision of additional support to those who need it most.

5.2 Early Intervention

Early intervention programmes involve close collaboration between class teachers and SEN teachers. A checklist of basic skills is administered in the first term of Junior Infants, followed by the BIAP (Belfield Infant Assessment Profile) in the final term. The MIST (Middle Infant Screening Test) is administered during the final term of Senior Infants. Following on from this, a child's weakest area is targeted for intervention. The scores achieved in the MIST highlight the children who will be identified for support in 1st class.

Many of interventions we use for literacy and numeracy, such as Power Hour:

- are set within a specific time frame;
- involve small group or individual teaching;
- include a strong focus on language development.

Other programmes are in use in the school to mitigate against social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. They are used in whole class settings, with small groups or individuals as appropriate. They include:

Friends for Life	Socially speaking
Weaving Wellbeing	The Alert programme
Talkabout	Exploring Feelings
Time to Talk	The Incredible 5 Point Scale

6. Selection of children for additional support

Children are identified for additional teaching support in accordance with the Continuum of Support Guidelines. The **Planning Template (Appendix 2)** is taken from the Guidelines accompanying Circular 13/2017, and provides a useful framework for our allocation of SEN support.

In summary, when selecting children for additional support, the following are taken into account:

- performance in standardised tests (children below the 10th percentile in literacy or numeracy are prioritised);
- children who previously received support from a Resource/Learning Support teacher and continue to experience significant learning difficulties;
- children who are identified as having significant needs through ongoing assessment and intervention (in areas such as behavioural, social or emotional functioning);
- children who have additional literacy or language learning needs, including those who need English Additional Language support; and
- children who are identified as being Highly Able.

7. Provision of support

The intensity of additional support is based on specific needs and is provided differentially through the Continuum of Support process. Those with the highest level of need are provided with the highest level of support. The NEPS Continuum of Support identifies three tiers of support: Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus. We use this framework to identify children's educational needs, including academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties.

NEPS Continuum of Support

Classroom Support	<p>The class teacher considers how to differentiate the learning programme effectively to accommodate the needs of all pupils in the class.</p> <p>A classroom support plan is developed and/or adjusted over time for those pupils who do not respond appropriately to the differentiated programme.</p> <p>This is informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental consultation • Teacher observation records • Teacher-designed measures /assessments • Basic needs checklist • Learning environment checklist • Pupil consultation - My Thoughts About School Checklist • Literacy and numeracy tests • Screening tests of language skills <p>A Classroom Support plan runs for an agreed period of time, is subject to review and is signed by class teacher and parents/guardians.</p>
School Support	<p>The SEN teacher in consultation with the class teacher considers how to differentiate appropriately to accommodate the child's needs.</p> <p>At this level a Support Plan is devised and informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher observation records • Teacher-designed measures/assessments • Parent and pupil interviews • Learning environment checklist • Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy • Formal observation of behaviour including ABC charts, frequency measures

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Functional assessment as appropriate, including screening measure for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties <p>A support plan at this level may detail suitable teaching approaches including team-teaching, small group or individual tuition.</p> <p>A School Support Plan operates for an agreed period of time, is subject to review and is signed by SEN teacher, class teacher and parents/guardians.</p>
School Support Plus	<p>The SEN teacher in consultation with the class teacher considers how to differentiate appropriately to accommodate the child's needs.</p> <p>This level of the Continuum is informed by a detailed, systematic approach to information gathering and assessment using a broad range of formal and informal assessment tools, reports from outside professionals (as appropriate) and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Teacher observation and teacher-designed measures · Parent and pupil interviews · Functional assessment · Results of standardised testing such as measures of cognitive ability; social, emotional and behavioural functioning; adaptive functioning etc. <p>Data generated from this process are then used to plan an appropriate intervention and can serve as a baseline against which to map progress.</p> <p>A support plan at this level is likely to be more detailed and individualised, and to include longer term planning and consultation.</p>

(Taken from "Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils With Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools" 2017)

A Student Support File is opened for each child who requires support at any stage of the continuum. This enables us to plan interventions and track a child's progress. **(see sample in Appendix 3)**

7.1 Parental involvement

Parents/guardians are involved at all stages of the Continuum. Their input into all support plans is not only welcome, but essential. Parents/guardians are invited to work closely with the class teacher and SEN teacher to set attainable targets for their children. The Continuum of Support process and use of the Student Support File provide valuable opportunities to engage with parents and to build a collaborative approach to identifying and responding to the needs of children with special needs. They are consulted regularly and are involved in reviewing their child's support plan on an ongoing basis.

7.2 Monitoring of progress

Children's progress in relation to achieving their targets will be regularly and carefully monitored. This stage of the process is informed using a variety of methods of assessment (for example, teacher-designed tests, checklists, samples of work, observation) that allow children to demonstrate their progress. This in turn may lead to adjustments in support plans and indeed the level of support required. The Student Support File includes a Support Review Record to guide teachers when monitoring progress and reviewing outcomes with parents and children.

8. Roles and responsibilities

8.1 Board of Management

The BoM fulfils its statutory duties towards children with special educational needs. It ensures that the provision required is an integral part of the School Development Plan. Members are knowledgeable about the school's SEN provision – funding, equipment and personnel. The BoM:

- oversees the development, implementation and review of school policy on support for children with additional needs;
- ensures that adequate accommodation and teaching resources are provided;
- provides a secure facility for storage of records relating to SEN; and
- makes provision in its annual budget for ongoing CPD for staff in relation to SEN.

8.2 Principal

The principal has overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of provision for Special Educational Needs. He works closely with the postholders with responsibility for SEN. It is the role of the principal in collaboration with the In-School Management team to:

- develop inclusive whole-school policies and monitor their implementation;
- assign staff strategically to teaching roles, including special education roles;
- co-ordinate teachers' work to ensure continuity of provision for all children;
- ensure that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, children and external professionals/agencies;
- ensure that effective systems are implemented to identify children's needs and that progress is monitored methodically;
- maintain a list of children who are receiving supplementary teaching;
- facilitate the continuing professional development of teachers in relation to education of children with Special Educational Needs;
- co-ordinate and organise the SNA's work and timetabling;
- liaise with and advise the SEN team and SNAs with regard to supporting children with special needs;
- ensure that all school staff are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities;
- keep teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed for initial referrals;
- advise parents/guardians on procedures for availing of special needs services;
- liaise with external agencies to arrange assessments of children with SEN; and
- liaise with SENO regarding all aspects of special education provision.

8.3 In-school Management team

Several members of our In-School Management team have responsibility for overseeing and implementing key areas of our SEN provision. The relevant postholders, in collaboration with the principal, are responsible for:

- formulating and updating the school's SEN policy;
- co-ordinating provision for children with Special Educational Needs;
- monitoring and evaluating SEN provision;
- supporting the implementation of a tracking system at a whole-school level to monitor the progress of children who avail of additional support;
- assisting the SEN team in the drafting of Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus plans; and
- contributing to decision making regarding the purchase of resources for the benefit of children with Special Educational Needs.

8.4 Class Teacher

Mainstream class teachers have first-line responsibility for the education of all children in their classes. Effective teaching and learning are critically important for all, especially for

those with additional needs. Meaningful inclusion implies that all children are taught in stimulating and supportive classroom environments where they are respected and valued.

Accordingly, classroom teachers ensure that they plan their lessons carefully to address the diverse needs within the classroom. This includes adapting their teaching approaches for some children whose individual progress, application, motivation, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers are causes for concern. It may require targeted interventions to develop relevant adaptive skills related to these needs.

These approaches include:

- co-operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms;
- active learning and collaborative problem-solving activities;
- scaffolded instruction and differentiation; and
- interventions to promote social and emotional competence.

Every child needs to be taught a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate to his/her developmental level. Children's levels of interest, attention, concentration and persistence should be gradually developed, extended and rewarded, using appropriate teaching strategies. To cater for the range of learning needs in any class, mainstream class teachers regularly differentiate their lessons.

This is achieved by:

- varying the level, structure and pace of lessons to meet individual needs;
- adapting lessons to take account of children's interests;
- matching tasks to children's abilities and needs;
- adapting and utilising resources, including the use of technology; and
- aspiring towards suitably challenging learning outcomes and assessing accordingly.

Where deemed necessary, the class teacher is responsible for opening a Classroom Support plan: He/she constructs a simple, individual plan of support for a child, before referring the child for Stage 2 interventions. This plan includes targets, interventions and progress.

8.5 SEN Teachers

SEN teachers ensure that they are familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and to meet a variety of needs. Teaching approaches include a combination of team-teaching initiatives, co-operative teaching, early intervention and small group or individual support.

The responsibilities of the SEN team include:

- delivering intensive early intervention programmes;
- assisting in the implementation of whole-school procedures for selection of children for supplementary teaching;
- contributing to the development of policy on SEN at whole school level;
- providing advice to the class teachers to assist in setting targets;
- providing supplementary teaching in relevant areas;
- researching the children's learning difficulties;
- implementing suitable recommendations from outside agencies;
- communicating as necessary with parents/guardians of children in receipt of additional support;

- developing a relevant Support Plan for each child, in consultation with the class teacher and parent/guardians; and
- meeting with parents/guardians of children at Support Plan Plus level at least twice a year to review and revise this support plan.

Some children with more complex and enduring needs may require specific methodologies, teaching approaches and/or learning activities. Such interventions are based on careful identification of strengths and needs, including multi-disciplinary assessment when necessary. The type of support offered depends on the child's individual needs and may take the form of:

- curriculum support for literacy and numeracy;
- life and/or social skills training;
- physical training/gross or fine motor development;
- speech training/communication and/or language development;
- behaviour modification programmes;
- assistance with sensory modulation;
- development of emotional management strategies; and
- a combination of some/all of the above.

SEN teachers are responsible for planning their interventions carefully to address the child's priority learning needs and to achieve the targets identified in the child's Support Plan. Short-term planning reflects the Support Plan targets and breaks down the development of skills and content into small incremental steps to address each child's specific needs. Outcomes for children are routinely assessed, recorded and used to review progress. These outcomes are also used to inform the targets for the next phase of intervention.

SEN teachers also collaborate closely with class teachers to identify children who may need diagnostic assessment. They collaborate with both the principal and class teachers to ensure that applications for psychological assessments, assistive technology or exemptions from the study of Irish are completed in a timely fashion.

8.6 Special Needs Assistants

SNAs provide for the significant additional care needs that some children with special educational needs may have. Circular 30/2014 outlines the Primary Care Needs Tasks. These may include:

- assistance with feeding;
- administration of medicine;
- assistance with toileting and general hygiene;
- assistance with mobility and orientation;
- assisting teachers to provide supervision for children with special needs;
- non-nursing care needs associated with specific medical conditions;
- care needs requiring frequent interventions for safety or personal care reasons;
- assistance with moving and lifting of pupils; and
- assistance with severe communication difficulties.

Secondary Care Associated Tasks are detailed in Circulars 08/02 and 71/2011. These may include:

- preparation and tidying of workspaces and classrooms;
- assisting a child with presentation or display of work, or transitioning from one lesson to another;

- assisting with the cleaning of materials; and
- assistance with development and implementation of Support plans, with particular focus on meeting the care needs of the child.

(see SNA policy for further details)

8.7 Parents/Guardians

The parents/guardians of the children of Rush and Lusk Educate Together can contribute to and enhance the work of the school by:

- supervising, assisting with, showing interest in and signing homework;
- where their child is in receipt of supplementary teaching, implementing suggested home-based activities and discussing the outcomes with the child's teachers;
- signing and returning consent forms to the school when necessary
- communicating via home-school diary where appropriate;
- talking positively about school and schoolwork;
- keeping the school informed of any home factors which may be affecting the child;
- participating in activities organised by the school that are designed to increase the involvement of parents in their children's learning;
- helping children to develop their organisational skills;
- supporting programmes and initiatives implemented by the school; and
- implementing programmes recommended by external agencies e.g. touch typing/ speech and language/occupational therapy plans etc.

There are opportunities for parents to work collaboratively with the school through initiatives such as STEM week and Book Week, "Mystery Reader", Garden gang. The Parent-Teacher Association organises many activities which encourage parents/guardians to get involved, for example, parent coffee mornings, talks from guest speakers on issues relevant to education

If parents/guardians have an issue with the Special Education provision for their child, they should firstly make an appointment to speak to the SEN teacher/class teacher, then the principal. The complaint will be investigated and dealt with as early as possible. If the matter is not resolved to the parents'/guardians' satisfaction, they may raise the matter with the B.O.M.

8.8 Children

The involvement of children in the development, implementation and review of their own learning programmes is an important principle underlining effective supplementary teaching. Children will, wherever possible and appropriate, be involved in the process by:

- outlining his/her interests, aspirations, strengths and areas of need;
- contributing to the evaluation of progress by participating in appropriate assessment activities (including self-assessment);
- becoming familiar with learning targets and contribute to setting of these targets;
- contributing to the selection of appropriate learning materials; and
- develop ownership of the skills and strategies taught during supplementary teaching.

9. Record keeping

The class teacher and SEN teachers maintain all records pertaining to individual children in a secure, locked filing cabinet, or securely stored electronically. Such records may include:

- results of class tests/teacher observations;
- results of standardised tests;
- outcomes of diagnostic tests, including reading analysis records;

- checklists (Basic Needs/Learning Environment/My thoughts About School checklists);
- signed permission from parents for testing and/or Support Plan to be implemented;
- Classroom Support plans/School Support plans/School Support Plus plans; and
- short term planning records.

10. Monitoring progress

In addition to monitoring outcomes at the individual level (see section 7.2), it is also important to review the effectiveness of our practice at group, class and whole-school level. Through the school-wide tracking system, the principal and In-School Management team will ensure that SEN provision is an integral part of the School Development Plan. It will be monitored on an on-going basis, through awareness of:

- the number of children at each of the three stages at any given time, and their movement between stages or out of the Continuum (by using a school-wide tracking system).
- the level and pattern of assistance being provided (i.e. average time allocated to individuals and the balance of in-class and withdrawal support).

11. Success Criteria

This policy will be reviewed annually by members of the SEN and In-School Management teams. School wide implementation of this policy will result in:

- clarity of roles of all those involved in providing support and effective collaboration between them (class teachers, SEN teachers, SNAs);
- high levels of partnership between parents/guardians and the school;
- positive attitudes towards and involvement in learning by children;
- improvements in levels of competency in literacy and numeracy; and
- improvements in other areas, such as behavioural/social/emotional development.

12. Ratification, Communication and Future Review

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in February 2020.

It has been disseminated to all staff. At the beginning of each school year it is brought to the attention of any new staff, and current staff are reminded of its content. It is available to parents/guardians via the school website or in hard copy format from the office on request.

As well as the ongoing in-school review of effectiveness, the policy itself will be reviewed by the Board of Management every three years.