

Belcarra N.S.

Special Education Policy

This policy was formulated in consultation with the teaching staff, Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), the management and Board of Management (BoM), of Belcarra N.S.

Legal Framework

Belcarra N.S. sets out to provide education for all its students, with reference to legislation regarding students with SEN, as listed below

- The Education Act 1998,
- The Education for Persons with Special Needs (EPSN) Act 2004
- The Department of Education and Skills (DES) Guidelines for supporting pupils with SEN in mainstream schools
- Special Education Circular 0013/2017 on the Revised Special Education Teaching Allocation.
- DES guidelines on the Continuum of Support
- SESS guidelines
- NCSE guidelines

Aims of the Policy

The principal aim of Special Education Needs Support in Belcarra N.S. is to provide a positive learning environment, which will foster the academic, social and emotional development of students with special educational needs and to enable each to realise their individual potential.

Special Education Needs Support provision also seeks to:

- Enable pupils of all abilities to avail of and benefit from an appropriate education.
- Provide students with consistent opportunities to experience success.
- Provide supplementary teaching and additional support in literacy and numeracy.
- Involve parents in the support of their child's education.
- Promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of a whole school policy on special education for pupils.
- Protect and enhance the self-esteem of the learner.

From September 2017 a new model was put in place to support pupils with special educational needs in all mainstream primary schools as per the guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Special Education Circular 0013/2017 and the National Council for Special Educational Needs (NCSE). Under the revised model the Department provides special education teaching supports directly to schools based on their educational profiles (including a baseline

component). A key principle underpinning this revised model is that all pupils, irrespective of special educational needs, are welcomed and enabled to enrol in their local schools. In addition, a fundamental objective is that special education teaching resources are utilised in the optimum manner to improve learning experiences and educational outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

The school hopes to achieve the following by updating the SEN policy:

- To guide the implementation of the revised model for allocating special education teaching supports.
- To include the most recent best practice in SEN.
- To reflect the most recent recommendations, most particularly the Continuum of Support at Primary Schools (NEPS).
- To outline our whole school approach to teaching/ learning in relation to pupils with SEN.
- To set out procedures for the enrolment of students with SEN in the school.
- To assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child in our school.
- Ensure that students with SEN are educated in an inclusive environment.
- Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the specific needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.
- Ensure that SEN is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.
- Ensure that students with SEN are offered a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Set high standards for students with SEN and provide them with appropriate guidance, encouraging them to achieve to their full potential.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with SEN.
- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at home.
 - To outline procedures and practices which will be followed in relation to supporting the learning of pupils with SEN.
 - To establish communicative structures for the involvement of all the partners in the education of pupils with SEN

In Belcarra N.S. we use the DES Continuum of Support framework to engage in a three step process to guide identification, intervention and monitoring of outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

Continuum Approach	
Stage 1 Classroom Support	<p>Teacher and parents collaborate to identify a pupil's needs, provide support, track and review a pupil's difficulties within the classroom.</p> <p>This involves an intervention process coordinated by the class teacher within the regular classroom. A Student Support File is opened at this stage and runs for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.</p>
Stage 2 School Support	<p>Involvement of SET (Special Education Teacher) for further diagnostic testing and assessment. An intervention process is usually coordinated by the SET working alongside the class teacher. Interventions at this stage are additional to those provided through classroom support.</p> <p>At this stage a Student Support Plan is devised for an agreed period e.g. one term. It may also involve consultation with the NEPS Psychologist. School Support Plans will be developed in collaboration with parents and relevant teachers</p> <p>Final review leading to return to Classroom Support, continuation at the School Support stage for additional term or a move to the School Support Plus stage.</p>
Stage 3: School Support Plus	<p>School may seek a referral to NEPS for consultation and/ or assessment. The school may also request the involvement of other external agencies e.g. Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Liaison with NEPS will enable more detailed consultation, assessment and development of intervention programmes.</p> <p>School Support Plus Plans will be developed in collaboration with parents and relevant teachers</p> <p>This level of intervention is for students with</p>

	<p>more complex and/or enduring difficulties and whose progress is considered inadequate despite carefully planned interventions at the previous levels of support.</p> <p>A small number of pupils may arrive at school with difficulties that are significant and are immediately recognised. In such cases, it may be more appropriate to begin support at the School Support Plus Level.</p>
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Note: In exceptional circumstances the school may be required to by-pass this process where a pupil presents unexpected, immediate or severe needs and where a formal referral or assessment to allocate appropriate support is not forthcoming in a timely manner. In such cases, the staff will operate with autonomy and discretion under the leadership of the principal to provide appropriate support to that pupil until such time as an appropriate referral can take place, e.g. where the pupil's needs pose a health and safety risk to him/herself or to other pupils.

Student Support File

A Student Support File Template has been developed by the staff in Belcarra N.S. to enable the school to plan interventions and to track a pupil's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates teachers in documenting progress and needs over time and assists them in providing an appropriate level of support to pupils, in line with their level of need. Following a period of intervention and review of progress, a decision is made as to the appropriate level of support required by the pupil. This may result in a decision to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or move to a higher or lower level of support.

As special educational needs can vary from mild to transient to significant and enduring, educational planning reflects the level of need of the individual pupil. In this regard, the Student Support File facilitates a graduated response across the different levels of the Continuum: Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus. For pupils with significant, enduring and complex needs, collaboration with external professionals, including multi-disciplinary teams, will be engaged to work with the child (for example, occupational therapist, speech and language therapist and psychologist).

Selection of Eligible Pupils

Applying the Continuum Approach and using various screening/assessment processes, the class teacher provides the first line of support to a pupil who presents with Special Educational Needs. Following a period of intervention and support at the classroom level and through consultation, a pupil may be referred to the SET for individual programme planning, specific learning support sessions or further diagnostic testing. Pupils are eligible if:

- They have been formally allocated Resource Teaching Hours and/or SNA provision for the current school year by the NCSE's SENO following a clinical or educational psychological assessment, i.e. pupils with Low Incidence Disabilities. This will involve external personnel

such as the NEPS Educational Psychologist, staff in Community Services (e.g. Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists), Local SENO.

- They are in any of the categories of Special Educational Needs eligible for Learning Support intervention as per Spec Ed 02/05 (General Allocation Model) e.g. achievement at or below the 10th percentile on standardised reading or maths tests, mild speech and language difficulties, ADD/ADHD, emotional and behavioural difficulties or High Incidence Disabilities such as a specific learning difficulty.
- They have mild or transient learning difficulties arising from identified speech and language difficulties or social and emotional difficulties.
- Depending on the time remaining, the teaching staff may also decide to consider other pupils who score close to the cut-off points on standardised or other screening measures.

The number of General Allocation System hours for each school is based on the assumption that approximately 19% of pupils will require intervention by the SET. i.e. School Support at any time.

Priority and Timetabling

- In general, support sessions of 15-45 minutes duration are allocated depending on the age and needs of the pupil/s.
- In general, the Special Ed timetable will be drawn up in September and reviewed in February.
- When timetabling, priority will be given to the pupils with greatest need. In general this will follow the order of the categories of eligible pupils above, with low incidence pupils who have been allocated specific resource hours receiving first priority.
- The SET will consult with the class teachers to ensure that withdrawal sessions occur at the most appropriate time in the pupil's day. All efforts will be made to ensure that pupils do not miss group class activities such as PE, Art and Music.

Support Continuation

In the case of the School Support Stage of intervention, the decision to continue or discontinue the supplementary teaching at the end of each defined period (e.g. an agreed instructional term of approximately 8-20 weeks) will be made by the class teacher and SET following a review of progress against the original School Support Plan. Parents will be updated at all stages. This will involve either:

- Discontinuation of supplementary teaching with continuation of appropriate support in the classroom or at home. The SET will check-in with these pupils to monitor their continued progress.
- Continuation of supplementary teaching for a further instructional term with a revised School Support Plan.

The School Support Plus level of intervention is reviewed as per the processes of the external agencies involved. The NEPS Psychologist or other Community/Clinical Service may recommend a follow-up assessment by their agency to review the pupil's provision.

Programme Planning, Implementation and Review

The staff will collaborate as a whole-school team on all aspects of the programme and ensure that regular formal and informal consultation time is made available for all class teachers with the SET, as well as time to meet with parents or external agency staff. This may include allocating agenda time at staff meetings. The following people have particular responsibilities as follows:

The School Principal

- Has overall responsibility to ensure that all tasks and duties in the programme are delivered and completed in an effective way.
- Will ensure that, in consultation with the Deputy Principal, appropriate correspondence, referrals and follow-up are made with external agencies and Community Services such as NEPS, the local SENO, clinical Child/Family agencies, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Department of Education and Skills, etc.
- Will provide overall management for the Special Needs Assistants.
- Maintain copies of external correspondence or confidential reports/documents in pupils' files stored in the school office
- To schedule, manage and complete the annual returns to the NCSE to apply for SNA allocation.
- To schedule, manage and complete any referral application forms to the NEPS service for full educational psychological assessments.

The Deputy Principal

The Deputy Principal (DP) has overall responsibility for Special Needs in the school:

- To implement DES Special Education guidelines.
- To identify and allocate timetable to pupils entitled to support
- To co-ordinate the drafting of Student Support Plans for all children identified in need of support.
- To co-ordinate the implementation of whole-school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching in line with the selection criteria specified in this policy and in consultation with class teachers and parents.
- To maintain a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and a list of pupils requiring further screening or observation.
- To collaborate with the principal and NEPS Educational Psychologist to maintain and file a list of pupils requiring a referral for educational psychological assessment.
- To develop and review school policy in relation to SEN in consultation with relevant Post Holders.
- To liaise with parents, staff and other professionals e.g. SENO, NEPS, Physiotherapists, Language Therapists, and Occupational Therapists.
- To co-ordinate standardised testing within the school.
- To maintain files of all tests, documents, plans and records to be stored in the filing cabinet in the SET room.
- Process and record any applications for the Exemption from Irish.

The Class Teacher

- Has overall responsibility for the progress of each pupil in his/her class and maintains records tracking this.
- Provides support and interventions to individual pupils, as well as tracking and reviewing the measures taken to support these pupils during the Classroom Support Stage of intervention.
- Will collaborate closely with the SET to ensure follow-up for pupils identified with potential special needs via classroom screening and observation.
- Ensures parents are involved with planning and review.
- Manages any Special Needs Assistants assigned to their pupils on a daily basis.

The Special Education Teacher

The duties of the SET, in consultation with the teaching staff and the principal, are to

- Ensure that parents are consulted regarding their child's participation in any support programme. Seek parental permission if any diagnostic tests are to take place.
- Create and file appropriate School Support Plus Plans and/or School Support Plans.
- Maintain and file a monthly planning/progress record or equivalent for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching.
- Give brief progress information or follow-up tasks to the class teacher and/or Special Needs Assistant in a timely manner after each session or week's work.
- Assign differentiated homework, where agreed with class teacher and parents.
- Provide supplementary teaching in English, Maths and Social/Emotional/Behavioural Skills to pupils who experience low achievement or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Provide a review and assessment of each pupil at the end of their School Support Plus Plan or School Support Plan and consult with class teachers and parents on the appropriate next steps.
- Schedule and timetable the programme each term to ensure the maximum benefit to all pupils, including pairing or grouping pupils with similar learning needs.

The Special Needs Assistant

- The SNA will provide support to their assigned pupil/s on a one-to-one basis or in the context of group support, as deemed most appropriate to the pupil.
- The SNA will carry out tasks and activities as organised by the class teacher or SET to support the pupil's School Support Plus Plan or School Support Plan and to assist with their personal care during the day (if necessary).

C/f DES circular 07/02, 30/14 guidelines for Special Needs Assistants.

Parents

- Parents are expected to attend meetings and are encouraged to provide feedback or comments to the class teacher on their child's progress on an ongoing basis.
- Parents will be asked to provide permission for any diagnostic testing by the SET.
- Parents will be invited to participate in planning meetings with the class teacher and SET to prepare and review the School Support Plus Plan or School Support Plan. Priority will be given to pupils with School Support Plus Plans followed by all other pupils requiring supplementary teaching.

Programme Implementation

Supplementary teaching will be delivered and organised with regard to the following:

- In accordance with pupils' learning needs, pupils will be supported by the most appropriate of the following interventions in order to meet the targets in their School Support Plus Plan or School Support Plan: - direct contact time with the SET, additional support by the class teacher or SNA within the classroom or differentiated homework.
- In accordance with pupils' learning needs, this may involve one or both of intensive one-to-one contact time or small group situations.
- In accordance with pupils' learning needs, support may be one or both of withdrawal time to the SETs room or other location or in-class support within the classroom or team teaching within the classroom. In-class support will always be planned and organised with the full collaboration of both SET and class teachers.
- Pupils may be paired or grouped with other pupils with similar learning needs where appropriate and beneficial to the pupils involved.
- With reference to the School Support stage of intervention, while the focus of support is on eligible pupils, the nature of the in-class support model and small group situations may deem it appropriate to include other pupils. This is generally a mutually beneficial experience for all pupils.
- Based on pupil progress and ongoing screening, the list of pupils and the overall timetable will be reviewed each term i.e. September to February, February to June.
- The support will be provided by the most appropriate teacher. This will usually be the SET but occasionally it may be appropriate for the class teacher to focus on the pupil/s while the SET provides in-class or withdrawal support for another group of children.

Exemption from Irish

Where the results of an Educational Psychological assessment suggest that a pupil is eligible for an exemption from the study of Irish and where the parents request this and agree this with the school, the school will grant the exemption in line with DES Circular 12/96. A copy of the Exemption Certificate will be kept on file in the school and a copy will be given to the child's parents. This exemption will be recorded on POD.

Transfer to a Special Education Class/ School

Where an Educational Psychological assessment report advises that a child would benefit from a temporary or permanent transfer to a Specific Learning Disability/ Special Class or a Special School the SET and Principal will liaise with the new school and provide any documentation or reports requested by the parents or new school.

Success Criteria

Some practical indicators of the success of this policy will include

- Children with special needs showing progress in assessments, screening tests and by review of School Plus/ School Support plans.
- Staff feedback indicating pupil progress. Teacher observations during class.
- Pupil feedback on their own progress and experience of the programme
- Parental feedback
- Follow-up reviews/assessments by NEPS Education Psychologists
- DES Whole School Evaluation or other Inspector's Reports.