

# **Special Education Needs Policy**

## Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed



November 2013

### **Special Education Needs Policy**

Coláiste Mhuire aspires to provide an inclusive education for all its students in a caring and supportive environment. The school aims to maximise the potential of all students.

### **Pupils with Special Education Needs include**

- Students with learning disabilities
- Students with emotional and/or behavioral issues
- Students with physical or sensory disorders
- Gifted students

### **Rationale**

The school's Special Education Needs policy is aspiring

- To provide an inclusive learning environment where all are encouraged to achieve their potential
- To enable each student to develop social and personal skills, thus enhancing self-esteem
- To encourage students with special needs to participate in the full range of school activities
- To offer an education which develops a variety of skills i.e. practical, artistic, musical and sporting
- To allow special needs students access to the curriculum and where possible, encourage students to sit Junior/Leaving Cert examinations

### **Assessment**

First year students are assessed as follows:

CAT testing by the Guidance counsellor

The special needs team administers standardised tests; GRT reading tests/Maths

Competency tests for junior cycle and the Access reading and mathematics tests for senior cycle

Psychologists' reports

Primary school reports

Information gathered by HSCL

Educational Psychology reports including assessments by NEPS psychologists

Academic Tracking (Monthly tests)

Informational teacher observation

### **Provision**

- School management applies for continuation of allocated resource hours. New applications are also submitted for consideration
- Learning Support/Resource teachers will help and offer advice to subject teachers on a needs basis

- The school has mixed ability class system in first year. The results of the assessments are made available to the subject teachers. This allows the staff to differentiate the classwork to meet the needs of the students
- Students who are exempt from the study of certain subjects are removed from class, and extra learning support is given in small groups during that time. Parents are informed regarding the implications of this and sign a letter to this effect.
- Some special needs students may receive help on a 1/1 basis. Each individual case is judged on its own merits based on the results of various testing, psychologists' reports or outside agencies.
- Application is made to state examinations Commission for reasonable accommodation in Junior and Leaving Cert examinations. These applications are made in consultation with parents, subject teachers and students.
- The coordinators of the School Completion Programme are proactive in assisting special needs students to stay in school and achieve their potential e.g. homework club, extra-curricular activities.

### **Inclusive Curriculum**

- The school is part of the JCSP programme
- All first year students are given the chance to "taste" optional subjects so they are able to make an informed decision on the options they choose.
- All Junior Cycle students (1/2/3 years) have an ICT class. This gives all students to chance to be digitally literate.
- Mixed ability classes allow the students in our school to have equal opportunity to a broad and balanced curriculum commensurate with their ability. Co-timetabling of core subjects and/or team teaching from 2<sup>nd</sup> year allows students to access the level most appropriate to their ability.
- Special needs students have equal access to the curriculum
- The provision of IEP is subject to agreement between unions and the DES

### **The Role of the Subject Teacher**

- In order to ensure that as a school we meet the needs of all our students subject teachers are encouraged to be aware of the School's policy and procedures for dealing with students with special educational needs.
- Be familiar with material provided by the school on meeting special educational needs of students and implement strategies outlined in same.
- Seek advice from the SEN Department regarding students with special educational needs.
- 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 resource teacher or the SEN Co-ordinator. (See Appendix 1 for the role of the SNA)

- Support/encourage independence in the student. This is particularly important for Senior Cycle students.
- Subject teachers must have due regard to the rights of students with special educational needs.

### **Communication**

- The HSCL works closely with parents. This means that the school is in regular contact with the family.
- The HSCL also liaises with outside agencies
- Visiting teachers for students who are visually impaired or have a hearing impairment meet with teachers as needed
- The school's care team may invite parents to discuss their child's progress
- The school diary is used to track students' progress. Results and comments are recorded in a formal manner allowing for continuous update of progress for both staff and parents.
- The Guidance counsellor offers guidance and counselling to students. He/she will also liaise with School Management, Special Needs personnel and the HSCL.
- Year heads are available to meet with parents as the need arises
- Formal meetings are arranged by appointment, involving all concerned.

### **Personnel in Learning Support/Special Needs**

1. School Management has full responsibility for timetabling of staff
2. Board of Management ratifies policies and ensures that the school is following a code of practice and is inclusive and in compliance with legislation.
3. Learning Support coordinator duties (split between special duties teachers) include
  - i. Administer, record and analyse results of Standardised tests
  - ii. Disseminate information from assessment and psychological reports
  - iii. Reasonable accommodation applications for Junior and Leaving Certs
  - iv. Referrals to psychologist under NEPS scheme
  - v. Organise repeat testing on an annual basis
  - vi. Source materials for students with special needs
  - vii. Liaise with other resource/learning support teachers
  - viii. Communicate with parents where necessary
  - ix. Apply for Assistive technology etc
4. HSCL provides links between home and school and also outside agencies
5. Guidance counselor offers guidance and counselling

6. Special Needs assistants may be involved in supporting the care needs of students within the classroom and in the wider context of social and personal education outside the classroom.
7. Other teachers who may be timetabled for resource hours.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_ [date].

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed:

(Principal)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 1

### Role of the SNA

The duties of the SNA are assigned by the Principal Teacher in accordance with circular 10/76, 71/11 and 07/02.

The work of the SNA should be supervised either by the Principal or in the absence of the Principal by a Class Teacher. Those duties involve **tasks of a non-teaching nature** such as:

- Provide input with regard to care needs for the preparation of IEPs
- Assist with care planning
- Provide assistance and information in relation to care needs for preparation of physiological and school reports and files. Also helping with briefing profiles on SEN pupils
- Assist in analysis of attendance for SEN Pupils
- Assist transition process in relation to care needs for pupils from one school to another and from one teacher to another.
- Provide Preparation and tidying up of SNA room(s) in which the pupil(s) with special needs is/are being taught – this includes any special equipment needed
- Assisting children to board and alight from school buses. Where necessary, travelling as an escort on school buses may be required.
- Special assistance as necessary for pupils with particular difficulties e.g. helping **physically disabled** pupils with typing or writing.
- Assisting on out-of-school visits, trips to matches, walks and similar activities.
- Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods.
- Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom (this may be to provide timeout)
- Administering approved medication
- General assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature. (Special Needs Assistants may not act either as substitute or temporary teacher. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class). Eg assist SEN pupils to display work, ensuring uniform and use of journal is maintained
- Participation with school development planning with special reference to SEN pupils
- Liaising with class teacher/resource teachers/Principal
- Assist in compiling information for staff on the care needs of SEN pupils.
- Work with teachers to promote independence of students as they progress through the school

Please note: it is not the job of SNAs to transcribe notes for students or to take notes down from the board.