

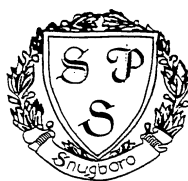
Special Educational Needs Policy

St. Peter's National School, Snugboro, Castlebar, Co Mayo.

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Special Educational Needs Policy

St. Peter's National School, Snugboro, Castlebar, Co. Mayo

The School Setting

St. Peter's National School is situated in a rural setting 2 miles from the town centre of Castlebar. This is a mixed school, with 304 children currently attending the school (2019/2020). Our school is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Tuam Diocese in the parish of Castlebar. The Board of Management consists of the Principal, one teachers' representative, two parents' representatives, two patrons' representatives and two community representatives.

There are 18 teachers in the school at present, the principal, 12 mainstream class teachers and 5 Special Education Teachers and one part-time post shared one day per week with 3 teaching positions on a job-shared basis. The Special Needs Assistant Allocation is 4 full-time SNA and 1 part-time SNA for the school year 2019/2020 with one of these positions also job-shared.

Beliefs and Principles

The mission of St. Peter's National School is to promote the fullest possible development of every child as a whole person. To help achieve this ideal, St. Peter's National School provides a broad education in line with the curriculum guidelines for Primary Schools, including coherent and practical planning for the inclusion of children with special needs, allowing each child to reach the highest level of personal attainment consistent with his or her abilities or talents, so that the school community is enriched by the unique gifts and talents of all its students.

St. Peter's recognises that the parents/guardians are the primary educators and that it is only through co-operation between them and the school that our ideal can be realised.

This mission statement is fully in keeping with the 1998 Education Act and EPSN 2004

1998 Education Act:

'to make provision for the education of every person in the State, including any person with a disability or who has other special educational needs, respect diversity spirit of partnership between schools, patrons, students, parents, teachers and other school staff, the community'

Education for People with Special Education Needs Act (EPSN 2004)

'A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature of those needs is such that to do so would be inconsistent with

- (a) The best interests of the child, or
- (b) The effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated

In line with our ethos and official Department of Education and Skills (DES) recommendations, School Support strategies will actively seek to include the diverse range of cultures and abilities of its students.

Consultation

This policy was formulated in consultation with the teaching staff and management of St. Peter's N.S., parents of students with Special Educational Needs (S.E.N.), the Board of Management (BOM), Special Needs Assistants (SNA's), the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), and the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO).

Rationale

- This policy document aims to outline the school's provision of additional support for students with S.E.N.
- It outlines the philosophy that underpins this provision.
- The policy is written in the context of the various pieces of legislation listed below.
- The policy is a working document and will be reviewed every four years.
- The policy is a reflection of our current practice.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all students with S.E.N., including students with exceptional ability, who attend St. Peter's N.S. It is also intended to serve the school community including BOM, the Principal, the teaching and ancillary staff and parents.

Legal Framework

St. Peter's N.S. sets out to provide education for all its students, with reference to legislation regarding students with S.E.N. as listed below:

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Education Welfare Act (2000)
- The Equal Status Act (2000)
- The Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill (2003)
- The Equality Act (2004)
- The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)
- The Freedom of Education Acts (1997 and 2003)

- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)

This policy is drafted in the context of:

- DES Circular Letters
- The guidelines published by the NCSE
- The guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process 2006
- The Guidelines on the Continuum of Support for Primary Schools (NEPS)
- The guidelines published by the Special Educational Needs Support Service (SESS)

Child Protection/Supervision

- Where pupils receive support on a one-one-basis, the SET teacher is responsible for ensuring that both they and the pupil are visible through the glass panel in the door.
- Where there is no glass panel, the door of the room should remain open.
- Where pupils are withdrawn for support, the SET teacher should collect and return children to their classrooms.
- Where a child has access to an SNA, they may withdraw the child from the class if a plan is in place with the class teacher.

For further details see [Child Protection Policy](#) and [Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment](#)

Aims of the Policy

The principal aim of Special Education Needs Support in St. Peter's N.S. is to provide a positive learning environment, which will foster the academic, social and emotional development of students with learning difficulties 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.
- To enable children to monitor their own learning and become independent learners
- Involve parents in the support of their child's education, and also involve the pupil in the collaboration and planning process (where appropriate).
- Promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of a whole school policy on learning support for pupils.
- Protect and enhance the self-esteem of the learner.
- To establish an early intervention programme designed to enhance learning and to prevent or reduce difficulties in learning.

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.
- On a need-to-know basis, 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 that will be followed in relation to supporting the learning of pupils with SEN.
- To establish communication structures for the involvement of all the partners in the education of pupils with SEN. (Learning Support Guidelines)

DEFINITIONS

Special Educational Needs

In the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) the term “special educational needs” is defined as

a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition...

(Government of Ireland, 2004b, section 1) <http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2004/A3004.pdf>

Inclusion

For the purposes of this document, the following definition by the NCSE, has been adopted. Inclusion is defined as a process of:

“addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners through enabling participation in learning, cultures, and communities”

and

“removing barriers to education through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements, to enable each learner to achieve the maximum benefit from his/ her attendance at school.”

Literature Review of the Principles and Practices relating to Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs (NCSE 2010, p.39)

http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/NCSE_Inclusion.pdf

Change in allocating special teaching supports

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Report Delivery for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (NCSE 2014), highlighted a number of shortcomings associated with the system for allocating special education teaching resources to schools. On this basis, the NCSE recommended a revised allocation model. Following successful piloting in forty-seven primary and post-primary schools during the 2015-2016 school year the Department decided to introduce a revised allocation model for all mainstream schools with effect from September 2017.

Special Education Circular 0013/2017 provides full details on the revised Special Education Teaching Allocation.

The main features of the revised model for allocating special education teaching supports

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.

Implementation of the Revised Allocation Model

The following principles are used by St Peter’s N.S. to guide the implementation of the revised model for allocating special education teaching supports. They form a whole-school approach to provision for pupils with special educational needs in our school.

Principles to guide the Implementation Process

- Resources provided to support pupils with special educational needs are used to facilitate the development of truly inclusive schools.

- Supports provided to pupils with special educational needs are based on identified needs and are informed by regular reviews of progress (in consultation with parents and pupils) as outlined in the Continuum of Support Guidelines.
- The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all pupils in the classroom, including pupils with special educational needs.
- Special education teaching supports provided to schools are used solely for the support of pupils with identified special educational needs, including those pupils for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL). The special education teaching supports are not used to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio in mainstream classes. Neither are they used to allow any special education teacher sole responsibility for the delivery of any curriculum subject to any particular class.
- Pupils with the greatest levels of need have access to the greatest level of support, and whenever possible, these pupils are supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.
- The school establishes and maintains a core team of teachers to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. All members have the necessary experience and access to continuing professional development to support the diverse needs of pupils with special educational needs.

A three-step process to support pupils with special educational needs

In St Peter's N.S. a three-step process is in place to guide identification, intervention and monitoring of outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

Step 1 - The Continuum of Support

St Peter's N.S. uses the Continuum of Support framework set out by the Department of Education to assist in identifying and responding to pupils' needs. This framework recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long term, and that pupils require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs. Using this framework helps to ensure that interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support, and that they are informed by careful monitoring of progress.

The Continuum of Support is a problem-solving model of assessment and intervention that enables the staff in St Peter's N.S. to gather and analyse data, as well as to plan and review the progress of individual pupils.

Identification of educational needs is central to the new model. By using the Continuum of Support framework, the staff in St. Peter's N.S. can identify pupils' educational needs, to include academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. The framework emphasises the importance of looking at a pupil's needs in context and provides useful resources to support this (for example, Learning Environment Checklist, Teacher Checklist for Whole-class Structures and Supports).

The Continuum of Support enables schools to identify and respond to needs in a flexible way. This means that needs can be responded to as early as possible. Of course, the principle that

pupils with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest levels of support is of primary importance. This approach is also supported by information and engagement with external professionals, as required.

Level 1 - Classroom Support

The class teacher considers how to differentiate the learning programme effectively to accommodate the needs of all pupils in their class.

A classroom support plan is developed and/or adjusted over time for those pupils who do not respond appropriately to the differentiated programme.

This is informed by:

- Parental consultation
- Teacher observation records
- Teacher-designed measures/assessments
- Pupil consultation - Literacy and numeracy tests

A Classroom Support plan runs for a minimum of 6 weeks and a maximum of 12 weeks before being reviewed and possibly referred to the SET team for Level 2 support. In exceptional circumstances this timeframe may be less.

Level 2 - School Support

At this level a Support Plan is devised and informed by:

- Teacher observation records
- Teacher-designed measures / assessments
- Parent and pupil interviews
- Basic needs checklist
- Learning environment checklist
- Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy
- Formal observation of behaviour including ABC charts, frequency measures
- Functional assessment as appropriate, including screening measure for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

A support plan at this level may detail suitable teaching approaches including team-teaching, small group or individual tuition.

A School Support Plan operates for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.

Level 3 - School Support Plus

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:

- 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.

Data generated from this process are then used to plan an appropriate intervention and can serve as a baseline against which to map progress.

A support plan at this level is likely to be more detailed and individualised, and to include longer term planning and consultation.

Educational planning

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is enhanced through clear identification processes and careful planning of interventions to address academic and/or personal and social development needs. Identification of needs, planning, target-setting and monitoring of outcomes are essential elements of an integrated and collaborative problem-solving process. In St. Peter's N.S., the process involves the class teacher, special education teachers, parents, the pupil and relevant professionals. Interventions draw on evidence-informed practice and the professional knowledge and experience of teachers. These interventions reflect the priority learning needs of pupils, as well as building on their strengths and interests.

Support plans set out

- the agreed targets
- the resources required
- the strategies for implementation
- time-frame for review

Student Support File

A Student Support File Template (Appendix 1) has been developed in St. Peter's 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 reflect 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).

Step 2 - Meeting the Needs

Having identified a pupil's needs and the educational planning required to meet those needs, this second step emphasises the importance of effective teaching and learning strategies.

The role of the class teacher

Effective teaching and learning is critically important for all pupils, and especially for those with special educational needs. Meaningful inclusion implies that all pupils are taught in stimulating and supportive classroom environments where they are respected and valued. Mainstream class teachers have first-line responsibility for the education of all pupils in their classes. Accordingly, classroom teachers plan their lessons carefully to address the diverse needs within the classroom. They adapt their teaching approaches as the need arises for some pupils whose individual progress, application, motivation, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers are causes for concern. This may require targeted interventions to develop relevant adaptive skills related to these needs. All mainstream class teachers in St. Peter's N.S. implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. These include:

- Co-operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms
- Collaborative problem-solving activities
- Heterogeneous group work
- Differentiation
- Interventions to promote social and emotional competence
- Embedding Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching, learning and assessment

In St. Peter's N.S. we believe that every pupil needs to be taught a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate to his/her developmental level. Pupils' levels of interest, attention, concentration and persistence are 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, mode of instruction and pace of lessons to meet individual needs
- Adapting lessons to take account of pupils' interests
- Matching tasks to pupils' abilities and needs
- Adapting and utilising resources, including the use of technology
- Aspiring towards suitably challenging learning outcomes and assessing accordingly

Teachers in St. Peter's N.S. make lessons accessible to a broad range of pupils through the use of a variety of appropriate teaching approaches and methodologies, including active learning, small-group tuition, individual teaching, and scaffold instruction. This, at times, requires environmental adaptations to promote curricular access.

The Role of the Special Education Teacher (SET)

Special education teachers in St. Peter's N.S. 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. Depending on the

learning needs identified, a pupil with special educational needs may be supported at classroom level or through mainstream classroom placement with additional teaching delivered through in-class or withdrawal support models.

Some pupils 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.

Special education teachers, in consultation with class teachers, plan their interventions carefully to address pupils' priority learning needs and to achieve the targets identified in the relevant Continuum of Support plan. Short-term planning reflect the Support Plan targets and break down the development of skills and content into small incremental steps to address each pupil's specific needs. Outcomes for pupils are routinely assessed, recorded and used to review progress. These outcomes are also used to inform the targets for the next phase of intervention.

Early intervention and prevention

In view of the substantial international evidence that early-intervention and prevention programmes can lead to improved outcomes for pupils, school leaders should ensure that some teaching resources are used for this purpose. After engaging in a process of self-reflection and review, they will become aware of whole-school issues that may be addressed through early-intervention programmes, which are evidence-based and which are responsive to the local context.

At times, St. Peter's N.S. may deploy additional teaching resources in junior classes to strengthen station teaching approaches which target the promotion of language, literacy and numeracy skills. The use of early-intervention and prevention programmes helps mitigate the development of learning, social and emotional difficulties.

St. Peter's N.S. recognises the importance of seeking advice and training in well-validated programmes to address behavioural and emotional needs. At present, Zippy's Friends Programme is being taught in Second Class as a means of building resilience and developing friendships.

Target-setting

We believe that good target-setting is central to effective teaching and learning for pupils with special education needs. In St. Peter's N.S. targets are expressed in a way that is measurable and observable, and reflect the specific special educational needs of individual pupils (for example, focus on social and emotional difficulties if that is a primary area of concern). The teachers endeavour to set targets which are achievable within a specified time frame and also challenge and build on existing knowledge and address pupils' holistic needs.

Best practice indicates that targets should be

- few in number
- strengths based
- informed by priority learning needs
- directly linked to suitable interventions

- based on the evidence collected through both formal and informal assessment approaches
- Developed collaboratively - teachers in St. Peter's N.S. consult with parents when setting targets and reviewing progress. The views of pupils are also included in this process, through their direct involvement in the discussion or by gathering their views in advance of the review process. We believe that this collaboration will help ensure that targets are relevant, meaningful, realistic, and that they draw on the strengths and interests of pupils.

Step 3 - Monitoring and recording outcomes for pupils with special educational needs

This stage of the process is informed by effective measurement of baseline performance, including the use of criterion-referenced tests and other methods of assessment (teacher-designed tests, checklists, samples of work, observation) that allow pupils to demonstrate their progress. This leads to the establishment of specific targets to be achieved within a defined timeframe.

Monitoring outcomes is part of a dynamic process of identification, target-setting, intervention and review, which in turn leads to adjustments in support plans. The Student Support File provides the teachers in St. Peter's N.S. with a useful resource to support and record this process. It includes a Support Review Record to guide teachers when monitoring progress and reviewing outcomes with parents and pupils. We believe that such monitoring of progress, and subsequent adaptation of support plans, are key drivers of effective practice.

In addition to monitoring outcomes at the individual level, we believe that it is also important to review outcomes at group, class and whole-school level. This review includes measures of attainment, communication, independence, attendance, social inclusion and well-being (for example, sense of belonging and connectedness to school) for pupils with special educational needs.

Allocating special education teaching resources to effectively meet needs

Special education teachers are deployed to address the needs of pupils with special educational needs in St. Peter's N.S. An important aspect of the revised allocation model is that additional teaching supports are deployed according to identified needs, rather than being based on a diagnosis of disability. This gives schools greater autonomy and flexibility in how they allocate special education teaching resources. Schools may deploy special education teachers in a variety of ways in order to effectively meet pupils' needs (for example, in-class support, individual and group withdrawal).

In St. Peter's N.S., we believe that effective communication and engagement with parents is critically important in moving towards a needs-based approach to the allocation of additional

teaching resources. This is enhanced when we consult parents in relation to their child's needs, support plan, and the review process.

When allocating teaching resources, the management and staff of St. Peter's N.S. are mindful of the benefits of early-intervention and prevention programmes and allocate teaching resources as required, based on identified needs and school context. St Peter's N.S. aims to strike a balance between in-class support, group and individual support. Importantly, the level and type of support reflects the specific targets of individual pupils as set out in their support plans and are also informed by careful monitoring and review of progress. In this way following a period of intervention, some pupils may no longer require additional teaching supports some may require the same level, while others may require more intensive supports, thus progressing to the next level.

When deploying teaching resources, St. Peter's N.S. recognises the essential need to maintain time for co-ordinating, planning, testing and reviewing activities in September, January, April and June to ensure effective and optimal use of supports. Co-ordination time is, however, kept to a minimum in order to ensure that teaching time is maximised. Additionally, St. Peter's N.S acknowledges the fact that flexibility in terms of resource allocation is required to allow for emerging needs during the school year. In St. Peter's N.S., the Principal informs the S.E.N. Team and whole staff of C.P.D. opportunities, especially when a training opportunity arises for their particular caseload.

Planning the allocation of special education teaching supports

In planning the allocation of additional teaching supports, the over-riding principle is that resources are deployed to address the identified needs of pupils. Importantly, those with the highest level of need will have access to the greatest level of support. In addition to literacy and numeracy difficulties, many pupils will have specific needs in such areas as oral language, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development and application to learning.

Allocation of Additional Teaching Supports for Pupils with Special Educational Needs contains the following areas:

Action 1: Identification of pupils with special educational needs

- Review existing information on pupils' needs, using school-based data, and any information from parents and external professionals.
- Engage in additional screening and data gathering as required, using informal and formal assessment approaches (for example, teacher observations, information on social and emotional competence, standardised tests, diagnostic tests)
- Identify all pupils with special educational needs in the school.
- Match their needs to the appropriate level on the Continuum of Support.

Action 2: Setting targets

- Based on individual needs, set clear learning targets for each pupil at each level of the Continuum of Support.

Action 3: Planning teaching methods and approaches

- Identify the level and type of intervention required to meet targets for each pupil on the Continuum of Support.
- Schools should consider methodologies best suited to promoting meaningful inclusion such as differentiation, heterogeneous grouping, team-teaching and small group teaching.
- They should also be mindful that the interventions and supports that they are using are evidence-informed.

Action 4: Organising early- intervention and prevention programmes

Based on identified needs, choose evidence-informed early- intervention/prevention programmes to address concerns. Identify time needed and staffing commitment required.

Action 5: Organising and deploying special education teaching resources

Cross-reference the needs of pupils at School Support and School Support Plus levels and consider common needs that can be met by grouping to ensure effective and efficient teaching and learning approaches.

Agree which teacher(s) will cater for these groups/individuals and when and where the teaching will take place. Be mindful of the requirement that pupils with the greatest level of need should receive the greatest level of support from teachers with relevant expertise.

Action 6: Tracking, recording and reviewing progress

Establish a tracking and recording system, to ensure that the progress of all pupils in meeting their identified targets is monitored:

- At Whole-school and Classroom Support level by all teachers
- At the School Support and School Support Plus levels by class teachers and special education teachers

A Whole-School Approach

Good practice in the identification of need, education planning, and allocation of special education teaching is supported through effective whole-school planning. This following section outlines the key elements of the inclusive whole-school approach to supporting pupils with special educational needs in St. Peter's N.S.

Inclusive Education

The NCSE (2011) described inclusion as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners. It involves removing barriers so that each learner will be enabled to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her schooling.

We believe that the whole-school approach to special educational needs provision in St. Peter's N.S. should reflect the Department's commitment to the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools. The whole school approach of St. Peter's N.S. endeavours to foster an inclusive culture which is characterised by:

- a positive ethos and learning environment whereby all pupils, including those with special educational needs, feel welcome and experience a sense of community and belonging
- an emphasis on promoting pupils' participation and active engagement in their learning and in the life of the school
- a commitment to developing pupils' academic, social, emotional and independent living skills
- a focus on high aspirations and on improving outcomes for all pupils

Whole School Planning

When implementing the revised allocation model to address the needs of pupils with special educational needs, St. Peter's N.S. has adopted a whole-school approach to programme planning and to the implementation of early-intervention and prevention programmes. In order to achieve this St. Peter's N.S. has adapted their existing special educational needs policies to guide the new approach to the allocation of resources.

A whole-school approach involves collaborative action by our school community (in consultation with parents, pupils, SNAs, class teachers, SETs, Principal) to improve pupil learning, behaviour and well-being. It encompasses a process of reflection, planning and review of policies and practices, and includes an evaluation of how pupils with special educational needs are identified by the school, the interventions that are put in place to meet their needs and how the outcomes of those interventions are measured and monitored.

The whole-school approach in St. Peter's N.S. addresses the full continuum of needs - ranging from milder and more transient needs to difficulties that are severe and enduring (for example, significant learning, sensory, physical, communication, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties).

Behaviour Management

In exceptional circumstances where a child with special educational needs has been identified as posing a Health and Safety risk to themselves or others a Crisis Management Plan will be implemented.

For children who exhibit challenging behaviour an ABC form is used and a Behaviour Support Plan is put in place. These are specific to the needs of the individual child. **Appendix 3.1/3.2**

Role of School Principal

The *Learning Support Guidelines* (2000, p.39) outlined the principal teacher's overall responsibility for the education of children with special educational needs. Under the new allocation model the principal's leadership role is central and includes the following:

- Developing inclusive whole-school policies and monitoring their implementation
- Assigning staff strategically to teaching roles, including special education roles
- Co-ordinating teachers' work to ensure continuity of provision for all pupils
- Ensure that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, pupils and external professionals / agencies

- Ensuring that effective systems are implemented to identify pupils' needs and that progress is monitored methodically
- Facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to education of pupils with special educational needs and ensure that all school staff (class teachers, special education teachers and special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area.

The principal is responsible for the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Role of Special Education Team in conjunction with the Principal

In conjunction with the Principal, the SET Team and SNAs in St. Peter's N.S:

- Assumes responsibility for the implementation and review of school policies on SEN
- Manage a tracking system at whole-school level to identify and monitor the progress of children with learning difficulties and of high achieving children,
- Maintain the listing and safe storage of psychological reports on children with special needs
- Coordinate the caseloads and timetables of SET, class teachers and SNAs.
- Consult with class teacher at the end of each term to discuss support plan for whole class, recording recommendations on a shared document
- Coordinate the implementation of whole school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching in line with school policies and the continuum of support practice
- Advise parents on procedures for availing of special needs services
- Prepare and apply for supports for children with SEN – access to SNA support, Assistive Technology, specialised equipment and furniture and Irish exemptions
- Complete NCSE forms and applications such as School Care Needs Profile, School Leavers and Confirmation forms, school transport, BCN1 forms and SNA appeals when required
- Liaise with parents of children with special needs and with external personnel – psychologists, therapists, SENO etc and arranging and accommodating meetings when required
- Maintain established links with feeder secondary schools and arrange meetings, handovers and follow up to facilitate the transition of SEN pupils
- Continue to coordinate and extend the use of Aladdin to allow shared access to class support records, student support plans and collaborative progress reviews
- Promote professional development opportunities in relation to SEN within the Special Education Team, with class teachers and SNAs
- Remain informed of current best practice within the Special Needs area

Parental Engagement

The staff and management of St. Peter's N.S. recognise that good parental engagement is a critical factor in enhancing outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

Parents are consulted

- in relation to their children's needs and strengths
- On the supports and strategies being developed to support their children and when they are involved in regular reviews of progress.
- To seek signed consent for SEN support and for peer involvement in social activities.
- When developing and reviewing policies relating to the education of children with special educational needs. This helps to ensure that parents understand the school's approaches and better enables them to support their children in transitioning through the school.

The Continuum of Support process and use of the Student Support File provide valuable opportunities for the school personnel to engage with parents and to build a collaborative approach to identifying and responding to the needs of pupils with special educational needs.

Appendix 4.1/4.2 sets out some key questions for parents which schools can use when drawing up an appropriate Support Plan.

Prevention Strategies and Parental Involvement:

Effective Whole-School approaches/Prevention Strategies:

- A print-rich school environment
- Use of Real books in classrooms
- Consistent language in Math's throughout all classes
- Consistent approach to learning spellings
- Shared Reading programmes for parents and children throughout the school
- Buddy Reading programme between junior and senior classes
- A Book Fair is held on a regular basis
- Use of library facilities is encouraged within school and outside of school
- Games that promote literacy and numeracy are used within the school
- Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading/Drop Everything And Read time
- Use of the newspaper in the classroom
- Use of varied teaching strategies in the classroom
- Use of audio books
- Use of ICT to support Literacy and Numeracy e.g. Wordshark, Numbershark, IXL etc.
- Use of IWB

Pupil Engagement

Good engagement and participation in their own education has many associated benefits for pupils. This is particularly important for pupils with special educational needs and can help enhance their academic and social and emotional outcomes.

Engagement is enhanced when schools listen to and build on pupils' interests, aspirations and strengths when developing educational interventions. This involves actively including pupils in a shared assessment for learning process, setting shared learning objectives, and jointly reviewing progress. Pupil participation is supported through teaching that is responsive to the personal needs of the learner, and is further enhanced by structuring and pacing learning experiences

that are challenging, engaging and enjoyable. From time to time, there may be a need to withdraw children (who are not receiving support) to facilitate group work in social and physical educational activities. Consent is sought to allow these children to participate in these types of activities/games in a withdrawal setting. These interventions generally run for a maximum period of 6 weeks with individual sessions not exceeding 3 times per week.

The Student Support File offers a useful framework for promoting pupil engagement and participation at all stages of educational planning and review.

At the whole-school level, St. Peter's N.S. encourages pupil engagement and participation so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have opportunities to share their views on issues that affect them in school, and so contribute to reviews of relevant policies and practices in our school.

Engagement with External Bodies and Agencies

Support and guidance is available to teachers from external professionals such as NEPS Psychologists, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), NCSE Support Service, the Inspectorate, SESS and allied health professionals. St. Peter's N.S. has established procedures/protocols for liaising with these services and bodies in order to optimise the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs at the individual, group or whole-school level. We believe that this is especially important for those pupils with more significant and enduring needs who benefit from a multi-disciplinary approach to identification of need and the development of interventions.

The needs of many pupils span both health and education services. Health services (HSE and HSE-funded services) will continue to play an important role in early identification, assessment and diagnosis, intervention and review for pupils with special educational needs. St. Peter's N.S. is familiar with the range of health services in our locality, including referral pathways. We believe that co-ordination is enhanced when the staff of St. Peter's N.S. liaise with and contribute to health-led assessment and delivery of interventions. Our school facilitates meetings between parents and various support services. The Staff in St. Peter's N.S. endeavours to incorporate relevant recommendations from health professionals in developing support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support.

Transitions

Good planning and support for transition helps to ensure the successful transfer of pupils from primary school to post-primary school and between special and mainstream settings. Effective transition support and planning can enhance the educational experience of the child and help reduce potential anxiety, particularly for the S.E.N. pupils. Links are already established with 'transition' schools in the area for our pupils. Transition meetings with these schools have helped ease the anxiety levels for the children in our school.

To support the reporting and transfer of pupil information from primary to post-primary schools St. Peter's N.S. utilises

- 6th Class Report Card
- My Profile sheet (for children)
- My Child's Profile sheet (for parents)
- With parental consent, reports pertaining to children with SEN

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

St. Peter's N.S. has established and intends to maintain skilled special education support teams to guide provision. Since all teachers have responsibility for teaching pupils with special educational needs, the management of St. Peter's N.S. encourages all staff members to engage in appropriate CPD to develop the capacity of our school to meet the educational needs of all pupils.

Admission of Pupils with SEN

The Department of Education acknowledges the very significant progress made by schools in developing inclusive practices and provision whereby the vast majority of pupils with special educational needs now attend mainstream schools. It also recognises that a small minority of pupils with significant and enduring needs may require a more specialist setting (for example, special class or special school placement). St. Peter's N.S. aims to meet the needs of any child whom the parent 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'. No child will be refused admission to St. Peter's N.S. solely on the grounds that s/he has SEN except where the provision required is incompatible with that available in our school.

Elements of the Admission Policy that relate to pupils with SEN are as follows:

- The BOM, through the Principal, has the right to request a copy of the child's Medical/Psychological/Psychiatric/OT/SLT/Physiotherapy/Behaviour Support Plans/School Support Plans/School Reports etc. report or where such a report is not available to request that the child be assessed immediately.
- The purpose of this assessment report is to assist the school in establishing the education and training needs of the child relevant to his/her disability and special needs and to profile the support services required.
- Following receipt of the reports the BOM will assess how the school could meet the needs specified in the reports.
- Where the BOM recognises that further resources are required, it will, prior to enrolment request the Department of Education and Skills (DES) or National Council for Special Education (NCSE see Circular 01/05)) to provide the resources required to meet the needs of the child as outlined in the psychological or medical report. These resources may include for example access to or the provision of any of a combination of the following: SET, SNA, visiting teacher service, specialised equipment or furniture, transport services or other. It will be necessary for the BOM of St. Peter's N.S. to identify

health and safety issues arising from the enrolment of a special needs child, for example, access, toilets, supervision and administering of medicine

- The relevant school staff will meet with the parents or if necessary a full-case conference involving all parties should be held.
- It may be necessary for the BOM to decide to defer enrolment of a particular child pending the provision of appropriate resources (EPSEN Act 2004).
- St. Peter's N.S aims to promote equality and social inclusion for all and recognises the importance of fostering an environment that encourages pupils to attend school and to participate fully in school life. (Education Welfare Act 2000)

Communication

Communication with Class Teachers

- The SET teachers will be in regular informal liaison with the class teacher.

Communication with Parents

- Parents will be invited to meet twice a year with the relevant SET teacher(s)
- If a parent or teacher has any concerns, an appointment can be made to discuss
- Communication will be between Parents and Class Teacher / SET Teacher / Principal.
- The SNA must refer all matters on curriculum, classroom management, discipline etc. to the classroom teacher. SNA and teacher should be alert to parent seeking educational type information on a casual basis. All such information should only be given out by the teacher. Brief communication between the SNA and parent during the morning and afternoon handover should be brief in nature and only relating to the wellbeing of the pupil. SNAs will refer Parents to the Class Teacher if Parents attempt to communicate with them regarding children for an extended length of time.

Communication with BOM

- The BOM will be kept informed of the SEN provision on a regular basis by the Principal.

Whole-School Collaboration

- SEN issues will appear on the agenda of staff meetings when necessary.

Communication with Outside Agencies

- Regular liaison with outside agencies will be maintained by the Principal and the SET teachers.

Communication with Principal

- The principal will be in regular contact with members of SET staff.

Record-Keeping

A full record of psychological reports, other reports and records of meetings are kept in the individual student's file in a central, secure location (in a locked press or cabinet) in the school. All information is managed in accordance with the directives of both the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.

Exemptions from Irish

Granting an exemption from the study of Irish

2.1 An exemption should be granted only in exceptional circumstances

Exempting a pupil from the study of Irish should be considered only in exceptional circumstances. The decision to exempt a pupil from the study of Irish is an important decision that has implications for his/her access to the curriculum and his/her future learning. The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the principal teacher, but it must be made following detailed discussion with the pupil's parent(s)/guardian(s), the class teacher, special education teachers, and the pupil. A decision to grant an exemption should only be considered in the circumstances set out in section 2.2 below.

2.2 The circumstances in which a pupil may be granted an exemption from the study of Irish

Exemption from the study of Irish may be allowed in the following exceptional circumstances only:

- a. pupils whose education up to 12 years of age (or up to and including the final year of their primary education) was received outside the State and where they did not have opportunity to engage in the study of Irish
- OR**
- b. pupils who were previously enrolled as recognised pupils in primary schools who are being re-enrolled after a period spent abroad, provided that at least three consecutive years have elapsed since the previous enrolment in the state and are at least 12 years of age on re-enrolment
- OR**
- c. pupils who:
 - (i) Have at least reached second class

And

(ii) Present with significant learning difficulties that are persistent despite having had access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy learning in both Irish and English over time. Documentary evidence to this effect, held by the school, should include Student Support Plans detailing

- Regular reviews of learning needs as part of an ongoing cycle of assessment
- Target-setting

- Evidence-informed intervention and review, including test scores (word reading, reading comprehension, spelling and other scores of language/literacy) at key points of review.

And

(iii) At the time of the application for exemption present with a standardised score on a discrete test in either Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling at/below the 10th percentile.

Or

d. Children of foreigners who are diplomatic or consular representatives in Ireland.

The School Management of St. Peter's N.S. is required to observe the following prescribed procedures in relation to granting pupils exemptions from Irish:

Procedures for granting an exemption from the study of Irish

A parent/guardian must make an application in writing to the principal of the school for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish on behalf of a pupil.

a) Considering an application for exemption

The principal will:

1. Ensure that the date of receipt of the application by the school is recorded on the form.
2. Acknowledge receipt of the application for exemption from the study of Irish in writing.
3. Discuss the written application with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and confirm the sub-paragraph on which the application is based (2.2a, 2.2b, 2.2c or 2.2d) as soon as practicable following receipt of a written application.
4. Advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the next steps in processing the application.
5. Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s)/pupil regarding any implication of an exemption from the study of Irish for the student while in post-primary education and into the future.
6. Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) that the application will be processed and the outcome confirmed in writing within 21 school days of receipt of the application.
7. Explain to the parent(s)/guardian(s) that a signed Certificate of Exemption will issue where a decision is reached that an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted.
8. Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) that, where an application is refused, the school's decision may be appealed to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 calendar days from the date the decision of the school was notified to the parent(s)/guardian(s).
9. Explain to the parent(s)/guardian(s) the arrangements for the pupil's learning in the case of an exemption being granted. b) Recording the decision the outcome of the application process will be conveyed by the school principal in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s). Where an exemption is granted, a Certificate of Exemption, signed and dated by the school principal will be

issued. The Certificate of Exemption will also state the name and address of the school, the school roll number, the pupil's name, date of birth and the sub-paragraph under which the exemption is being granted. Parents/guardians and pupils should be informed of the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.

2.4 Appeal

Where the application for exemption from the study of Irish is refused, a parent/guardian can appeal the school's decision to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee (IEAC). The deliberations of the IEAC will focus solely on the process the school engaged in reaching its decision. The IEAC will consider how the school followed the process as prescribed in Circular 52/2019 and the accompanying Guidelines for Primary Schools. An appeal must be lodged within 30 calendar days from the date the decision of the school not to grant an exemption was notified in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s). The Irish Exemptions Appeal Form and Guidelines for Primary Schools can be accessed at www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish-Exemption/.

3. Arrangements for pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish

Schools, where appropriate, should take account of the literacy learning needs of pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish when deploying available special educational needs resources. To support inclusive practices, a pupil who is exempt from the study of Irish should be included in a meaningful way in aspects of Irish language and cultural activities in line with his/her ability and interests.

4. Supports for pupils who have no understanding of English when enrolled

A pupil who has no understanding of English when enrolled and whose education up to 12 years of age or up to the final year of his/her primary education was received outside the state, should be provided with intensive English as an Additional Language (EAL) in preparation for his/her full engagement with the Primary Language Curriculum at a level commensurate with his/her ability.

5. When will the terms of Circular 52/2019 come into effect?

The terms of Circular 52/2019 are effective from the beginning of the school year 2019/2020. The Circular will apply to all applications for exemption from the study of Irish for pupils who are currently enrolled in English medium primary schools and to pupils who will enrol in English-medium primary schools in the future. An exemption granted to a pupil may be operative throughout his/her enrolment in primary and post-primary school.

6. Reporting on exemptions granted to the Department

The school management will be required to provide statistical information relating to the number and the grounds on which exemptions were granted under this Circular in the previous school year as part of the Primary School Annual Census. As set out in 2.3.b) above, a copy of the Certificate of Exemption must also be given to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the pupil being exempted.

7. Pupils transitioning to other schools

It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that a copy of the pupil's Certificate of Exemption is made available to the receiving school.

8. Monitoring and reviewing Circular 52/2019

The operation of the Circular will be monitored regularly by the Department. An initial review of the operation of this Circular will be conducted after the first two years of implementation and periodically thereafter.

9. Data protection

In processing applications schools must comply with data protection law.

10. Further information

Further information can be found at the following website:

www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish-Exemption/

Complaints

If parents have a complaint about the Special Education provision made in St. Peter's N.S., then they should in the first instance make an appointment to speak to the SET teacher and then to the Principal.

The complaint will be investigated and dealt with as early as possible. If the matter is not resolved to the parents' satisfaction, then the matter proceeds to the BOM.

Priority areas for Development

- Appropriate accommodation for Special Education Team.
- Sensory Room.
- Library for whole-school access.
- Increase resources for whole SET Team.
- Ongoing professional development opportunities for staff in the area of special education.
- Raising teacher awareness of, and expertise in, differentiated teaching methodologies.

Communication, Monitoring and Reviewing

This policy will be communicated to staff and the school community as appropriate and will be subjected to regular review. In accordance with the systematic cycle of review of policies adopted in St. Peter's National School, it will be reviewed every four years, unless there is a compelling reason to review it earlier. The BOM will ensure that SEN provision is an integral

part of the school development plan and will evaluate the effectiveness and success of this policy by monitoring:

- The standards obtained by children with special needs
- The number of children at each of the three stages: Differentiation within Class, School Support and School Support Plus
- The level and pattern of help (i.e. average time allocated and the balance of in-class and withdrawal support)
- Views of parents
- Visits from specialist teachers Staff views on in-service Children's views

Appendix 1

Reference, Checklists and Guidelines for teachers of students with learning disabilities:

DES Special Education Needs A Continuum of Support Resource Pack for teachers DES

Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties A Continuum of Support

Circular 13/2017 Special Educational Needs – New Model

Circular 30/2014 Special Needs Assistants

Useful websites:

Department of Education and Skills: www.education.ie

National Council for Special Education: www.ncse.ie

National Council for Curriculum Assessment: www.ncca.ie

Health Service Executive: www.hse.ie

Special Education Support Service: www.sess.ie

List of additional documents used in SEN planning:

- Basic Needs Checklist
- Learning Environment Checklist
- Identification of Educational Needs through the Continuum Support (Overview Page)
- Student Support File
- Special Education Needs Parents' Consent Form
- Pupil Profile Parents' Form
- Permission to discuss your child with the psychologist letter
- SEN Timetables

This is not an exhaustive list.

Appendix 2

School Testing

Phonics Testing – Junior and Senior Infants

Jolly Phonics and Jackson Phonics assessments that teachers can use with their pupils in a one-to-one situation. These assessments provide an easy and quick method of assessing children's decoding and comprehension knowledge.

MICRA-T

Standardised Reading Test for 1st class. This assessment is conducted in late September and May.

SIGMA T

Standardised Maths Test for 1st-6th Class. This assessment is conducted at the end of September in 1st class, and for all classes from 1st-6th in May/June each year.

New Drumcondra Primary Reading Test

Standardised Reading Test for 2nd-6th Class. This assessment is conducted in May/June each year.

NRIT

The NRIT tests assess aspects of language and thinking that are not necessarily represented in measures of pupil attainments and help to pinpoint low-achieving and slow-reading pupils who may have high underlying ability. This is conducted in 2nd and 4th classes.

QUEST II

This is a screening and diagnostic kit. Suitable for children age 7-8.

NARA/DRA/YARC

Tests oral reading, based on a series of short narratives, providing summative measures and detailed diagnostic information.

PM Benchmarking

The PM Benchmark Reading Assessment Resource has been designed to assess students' instructional and independent reading levels using unseen, meaningful texts. This is used as a means of assessing which level the pupil will start on in the Literacy Lift-Off programme.

Aston Index

Aston Index is comprised of a series of tests for the screening and diagnosis of language difficulties. The Aston Index consists of 17 sub-tests, the use of which, as its name implies, will indicate the nature of an individual child's learning potential for literacy. The sub-test scores yield a 'profile' from which a teacher can perceive the levels of 'readiness' for learning; and which sub-skills and abilities will need special help in teaching.

The Aston Index can be used to indicate the particular learning pattern of the child and identify specific types of learning patterns

Age suitability: 5 to 14 years

MALT

BIAP

This is not an exhaustive list of assessments. Others may be used from time to time to assess the needs of individual pupils.

Appendix 3.1

Sample Behaviour Plan for
January-March 2019

Classroom Behaviours	Proactive strategies & Relationship Strategies	Coaching & Praise	Specific Reinforcers
1. Negative behaviours: Aggressive, hands-on, physical rough play resulting in hurting others 2. Positive opposite behaviours: Hands to self, gentle respectful play	• Reinforce rules daily • Reward positive behaviour • Use Thermometer and calm down strategies	• Proximity praise • Coach quiet hands and calming strategies • Happy gram to be sent home to communicate positive behaviour	• Personalised reward chart with stickers to be sent home each Friday • Choice of game/activity with peer after 3 stickers • Visual timetable to reduce anxiety
1. Negative behaviours: Interrupting teacher and others consistently during class 2. Positive opposite behaviours: Use appropriate channels to communicate Take turns and listen to others	• Reinforce 'Show Me 5' approach daily • Hand up to signal to teacher	• Praise those who do not interrupt • Role-play scenarios where a pupil is constantly interrupting • Call on quiet children to speak • Proximity praise	• Personalised reward chart with stickers to be sent home each Friday • Choice of game/activity with peer after 3 stickers • Visual timetable to reduce anxiety

Appendix 3.2

Incident and ABC Chart

Name: _____ **Class:** _____

Date/Time/ Where	Activity	Antecedent	Behaviour	Consequence	Strategies used	Staff involved	Teaching Time effected

Appendix 4.1

Special Education Consent Form

September 2019

Dear Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s),

I, _____, am a member of the Special Educational Teacher team in this school.

I will be working with _____ this term for his/her school support time, as advised by the Department of Education. This support may be on a one-to-one-basis or in a group setting. This extra tuition will necessitate parental consent. Please return the consent form below as soon as possible.

If you have any questions or need advice, you can make an appointment to meet me at the school.

Yours Sincerely,

.....

CHILDS NAME: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____

I would like my child to attend Support classes:

YES • NO •

I consent to the Special Education Team conducting formal and informal assessments to draw up an appropriate Support Plan:

YES • NO •

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____

If there is any information relating to your child which might enable me to be more supportive and helpful to him/her, please let me know e.g. medical/family circumstances/specific learning difficulties.

Appendix 4.2

[Student Profile](#)

[Parent Form](#)

Child's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Place in Family: _____

Medical/Health: _____

Interests: _____

Class: _____ Class Teacher: _____

Date completed: _____ Completed by: _____

Parent/Guardian names: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

My child's strengths and interests:

Areas in which my child has developed/made achievements over the past year:

Areas I feel my child continues to need help and support:

Any other general comments which may be of assistance when drawing up your child's programme of work for the current school year or information you feel is relevant:

Signed: _____ (*Parent/Guardian*)

Date: _____

Appendix 4.3

Peer Consent Form

Dear Parent / Guardian,

We are the Special Education Teachers in St. Peter's National School.

From time to time, there may be a need to withdraw children (who are not on our caseload), to facilitate group work in social and physical educational activities.

Should the occasion arise, we are seeking your consent to allow your child to participate in these types of activities/games in a withdrawal setting.

These strategies generally run for a maximum period of 6 weeks.

Please sign and complete the permission slip below and return it to your child's class teacher.

Thanking you for your support and assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Special Education Teachers (SET Team)

CHILD'S NAME: _____

CLASS: _____

I hereby give my consent for my child to attend group activities. YES • NO •

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

FAQs to accompany SEN policy

1. What is SEN?

SEN means Special Educational Needs. Under the new model of allocation, the term special educational needs is broad and includes children who have difficulty attaining literacy and/or numeracy skills, children with fine or gross motor skills in so far as they impact on the children's progress, children who have English as an additional language (if that impacts on their progress) and children who have diagnosed disabilities. It also includes children with social or emotional

needs. The new model of allocation for SEN teaching provides for appropriate teaching for these children using what is called a staged approach.

2. **What do you mean by a staged approach?** We take a step-by-step approach to understanding and supporting children who are presenting with a special educational need. There are three main “*stages*”, and they are outlined in the policy document under the heading Continuum of Support. The Continuum of Support is developed by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and is used in all primary schools.

3. **Who decides which teacher works with my child?** It is the Principal’s responsibility to allocate teachers to classes. The Principal is mindful of the needs of our pupils and the particular strengths and interests of our teachers.

4. **Who has access to my child’s reports?** Professional reports are often provided to the Principal to assist us in planning appropriately for your child. The reports are confidential and are only shared with the teachers of your child.

5. **What is Aladdin?** Is it secure? Aladdin is our Information Management System. It is cloud based and secure. It is GDPR compliant (data protection regulations). Teachers only have access to records for pupils in their current class.

6. **What is an SNA?** An SNA is a Special Needs Assistant who is employed to assist with the care needs of a specific child or children while in the care of the school. The allocation of SNAs is governed by DES Circular 30/2014.

7. **What is a Personal Pupil Plan?** A Personal Pupil Plan outlines a pupil’s special care needs and shows how the SNA will be deployed to assist the pupil. The plan is developed with the parents and teachers of a pupil and refers to the pupil’s support plan (based on the Continuum of Support).

8. **Can my child have support from an SNA?** If your child has a disability and has care needs, please talk to the Principal or Deputy Principal to discuss an application for SNA access.

9. **What is NEPS?** NEPS is the National Educational Psychological Service and is a service of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and aims to support the personal, social and educational development of all children through the application of psychological theory and practice in education. It has particular regard for children with special educational needs.

10. **What is NCSE?** The National Council for Special Education. It was set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special education needs. The NCSE is responsible for the allocation of teaching supports and SNAs to support children with special education needs. This is organised locally through Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs).

11. **What is the HSE and why is it involved in schools?** The HSE is the Health Service Executive and part of its duties concern the care and welfare of children. The HSE provides services to children through its Early Intervention Teams, its School Age Teams, its Speech & Language and Occupational Therapy services etc. The HSE also offers vision and hearing screening to pupils in our school, and it also offers booster vaccinations to those in the junior infant class.

12. **What is a screening measure or test?** Screening tests are easy to administer, contain relatively few items, and can be completed in a relatively brief time, sometimes only a few minutes per child. They can be paper and pencil tests, rating scales, checklists or observations of skills/abilities. They are used to alert the school to possible areas of concern. These concerns can then be explored with in-depth assessments. Screening tests are especially useful in identifying an issue a child may have before the child even realises it themselves. Therefore the school can help target needs before they become an issue of negative self-concept for the child.

13. **What is a diagnostic test?** A diagnostic test or assessment can provide a profile of a pupil's strengths and weaknesses and can help the teachers develop appropriate teaching plans for the pupil. These plans form part of the Student Support File.

14. **What is a STEN score?** A STEN score is a number used as a marker to compare children's results, on a standardised test, within a national average. The numbers include a range of up to ten; but these are not equal numbers – they are not fractions of a whole number, as is commonly misunderstood. The child does not receive a rating out of 10.

About 68% of children score between 4 and 7 as this is the average range. Only 2% of children nationally score a STEN of 10. Only 4% of children nationally score a STEN of 9.

15. **What is a percentile score on a test?** A percentile score compares a child's test score with other children who took the same test. For example, a child who scores the 60th percentile has done better on the test than children who score 59th percentile or below on the same test. Standardised tests give teachers norms to compare scores with, so that we know how children score compared to other children in Ireland taking the same test.

16. **What is meant by Low Incidence Learning Disability?** Low incidence learning disability refers to disabilities which occur less frequently in the general population. These include moderate, severe or profound general learning disability; significant physical or sensory impairment (e.g.: vision or hearing); severe emotional or behavioural problems; autistic spectrum disorder; and other diagnosed syndromes.

17. **What is meant by High Incidence Learning Disability?** High incidence learning disability refers to disabilities which are seen more frequently in the general population. These include specific learning disability (dyslexia and dyscalculia) and mild general learning disability.

18. **What is EAL?** EAL means English as an Additional Language. Teaching supports are provided to children who have English as an Additional Language in so far as it impacts on their educational progress. Many of our pupils who have English as an Additional Language have well developed literacy and numeracy skills which transfer onto their learning of English.

19. **What is Aistear?** Aistear is part of the National Curriculum framework for early childhood education. In our school, Aistear takes the form of structured play-based learning around chosen themes in the Junior and Senior Infant Classes.

20. **What is Shared Reading?** What is Buddy Reading? These are reading approaches which allow our younger children to partner with an older child or reading buddy. The children have the opportunity to read aloud, discuss contextual cues, illustrations, make predictions and talk about the stories they are reading. The older partners, and buddies, avail of the opportunity to hone their questioning skills, their critical thinking skills; and allows for a culture of care and respect to grow in our school.

Ratified by the Board of Management, St. Peter's National School, Snugboro, Castlebar, Co. Mayo

Scheduled for review: _____

Signed: _____ **Chairperson**

Date: _____