



## St Fintan's National School

### Special Education Policy

#### Introduction

St Fintan's National School is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. It is a mainstream primary school, catering for a full cross section of children. The purpose of this Special Education Policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other relevant parties regarding the provision of tailored, effective support in their area/s of need, for relevant pupils in St. Fintan's NS, as well as to fulfil the school's obligations under the Education Act 1998.

The school currently has the following provisions to cater for children with Special Educational Needs or children in need of support:

- Special Education Teaching Team
- Special Needs Assistants Team (to meet the agreed care needs of relevant children).

Access to and participation in the above resources is governed by this policy.

#### Implementation and Review

The implementation of this policy will commence immediately on ratification by the Board of Management and is reviewed every three years in the third term or as circumstances may warrant.

#### Broad Aims

The principle aim of this Special Education Policy and the support model outlined herein is to support and enable pupils experiencing difficulties to achieve levels of proficiency in their area of assessed need consistent with their age and stage of development or potential. This may for example be in the areas of literacy, numeracy, social skills or other areas depending on the individual needs of the child. This policy is aligned to and follows the principles of the Department of Education and Skills' "Continuum of Support".

Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

- Facilitate pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level
- Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning

- Enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners within their own ability
- Involve parents in supporting their children's learning
- Promote collaboration among teachers

### **Guiding Principles**

The school recognises that effective learning programmes are based on the following principles:

- Effective whole-school policies
- Whole school involvement
- Provision of intensive early intervention up to and including second class for pupils most in need

### **Selection of Pupils for the Continuum of Support**

- Any child with a clinical diagnosis or considered to be presenting with social/emotional self-management needs may be considered for additional support from the Special Education Teaching (SET) Team, working in partnership with parents, if deemed necessary by the school.
- Junior Infant pupils are screened during their first year using all available information (clinical / teacher assessments, reports etc.) teacher observation and testing.
- In Senior Infants all pupils are screened using the Middle Infants Screening Test (MIST) and Drumcondra Test of Early Numeracy Skills (DTENS).
- In 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> classes all pupils are screened using the NNRIT (New Non Reading Intelligence Test)
- From 1<sup>st</sup> class upwards all pupils are screened annually using The Drumcondra Tests in numeracy, literacy and spelling.
- Priority for support is given to those pupils who perform at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile.
- In the case of pupils performing at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile, the screening process is followed by a consultative meeting between the Class Teacher, the allocated Special Education Teacher (SET) and the parents concerning the pupil's performance. The child may be placed at the appropriate level of the Continuum of Support be offered.

In the allocation of places for support, the following are prioritised in the area of language skills / literacy:

1. Pupils with a clinical diagnosis and supporting report, as appropriate.
- 2 Junior and Senior Infants identified by the Class Teacher through teacher observation and MIST or other screening instruments for the children observed as having difficulty in literacy
- 3 Children from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile in literacy.

The following are prioritised in the area of numeracy:



1. Senior Infants identified by the class teacher and DTENS as having difficulty in numeracy
2. Children from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class, at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile in numeracy.

Note:

- The allocated Special Education Teacher may be able to offer support to children up to the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile in literacy (priority) and if resources available, then in numeracy.

### **Provision of Special Education Teaching**

- There is a SET allocated to every 2-year class-level cycle. In practice this works out as follows:
  - Junior & Senior Infants: 1 SET
  - 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Class: 1 SET
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Class: 1 SET
  - 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Class: 1 SET
  - 1 other SET assigned where the need is greatest.
- The primary work of the SET Team is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils identified above either in class or out of class in small groups / 1 to 1 SET.
- The school year will be divided into 2 instructional terms of approximately 15 weeks each starting from end September / October annually.
- In line with recommended best practice, in-class support / team-teaching support is the preferred model of support in the first instance
- One to one teaching may be provided where in class/team teaching or small group teaching has not been effective or suitable
- A blend of withdrawal and/or in-class support may also be offered
- The Class Teacher and the SET will meet to devise a plan which may include a School Support Plan (SSP) in consultation with the parents
- Any and all educational meetings with the parent/s of a child with a clinical diagnosis and a SSP will be a team meeting which will always include (where available) class teacher, SET, parents and may include the School Principal if deemed potentially helpful or necessary by the school.

Each plan will be monitored through teacher observation, the keeping of planning and progress records, as deemed necessary by the school.

### **Provision of Support:**

Under the model of support outlined in this policy, it is deemed best practice to provide in class support or team teaching initially. This is in-line with the Department of Education recommendations and best practices where children are supported in their classrooms rather than being withdrawn.

### **Support Provision for Exceptionally Able Pupils – including those Pupils at or Above the 95<sup>th</sup> Percentile on Standardised Tests:**

The SET team provides a resource pack to each class teacher for children who have scored at or above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile in literacy or numeracy standardised test scores, from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class. This resource pack is intended to enrich the curriculum and to challenge these children to reach their curricular potential. Children in this range demonstrate high academic ability and the resources have a strong academic element. They include areas such as mathematical reasoning, comprehension, puzzles, games and computer software.

From time to time, the school also provides additional learning opportunities or projects, which can be differentiated to further support exceptionally able children.

### **Recommendations for Referral to out of School Agencies (School Support Plus):**

- In exceptional circumstances or following a child's completion of a period of teacher assessments and targeted support, the Principal and /or SET with Class Teacher may consider that the needs of the relevant child cannot currently be met within the school. In such circumstances, a SET team meeting will be arranged (see above for members of "SET Team") at which it may be recommended for a parent / guardian to refer their child to an outside agency / educational / clinical psychologist.

### **The Role of Private Psychological Reports**

- The school is obliged to engage with NEPS as the primary source of educational assessments. As such, the school does not engage in the recommendation of private psychological assessments. Moreover, the school will not ask teachers to engage in the process of a private psychological assessment taking place outside of filling in a teacher survey type form.
- We do, however, recognise the role these private assessments play in providing a rounded picture of the pupil concerned. If the school is furnished with such a report, we will read it in good faith, and judge how we may use the report to benefit the child.
- The school is under no obligation, however, to accept the recommendations laid out in a private assessment, particularly in the areas of allocating SNAs to said child, or allocating 1 to 1 teaching hours.

### **Board of Management**

The role of the Board of Management is to:

- Oversee the development, implementation and review of the provision of the support model in the school
- Ensure adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the child with SEN and class teachers
- Provide a secure facility for storage or records in relation to pupils in receipt of Support
- Budget for ongoing support for Professional Development in support for staff.



## **Principal**

The role of the Principal is to:

- Oversee the implementation of this policy.
- Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policy on Special Educational Needs in co-operation with the Board of Management, Teachers, Parents and Children.
- Work with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan for support in the context of Special Needs Education
- Facilitate termly meetings with class teachers and the relevant individual support teachers / head of Special Education to review practice.

## **Class Teacher**

- The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class, including those considered for support teaching. In supporting the development and implementation of the school plan on SEN, the class teacher should:
- Implement teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all pupils and in so far as is possible prevent the emergence of learning difficulties
- Implement the school policies on screening and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in English and Maths by co-operating and assisting with the administration and scoring of appropriate screening measures
- For each pupil on the Continuum of Support to collaborate with the SET in the development of a SSP and learning programme, by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities or in class support/team teaching to achieve these targets
- For each pupil who is on the Continuum of Support, to adjust the classroom programmes in line with the agreed learning targets and activities.

## **Special Education Teacher**

The role of the SET is to:

- Develop SSP for each pupil who is on the Continuum of Support in consultation with the Class Teacher and parents
- Maintain a planning and progress record or equivalent, as necessary, for each individual or group of pupils on the Continuum of Support
- Provide support in literacy and or numeracy for pupils in need of it, in accordance with the school's selection criteria
- Work in partnership with class teachers in relevant curricular areas to deliver in-class and/or withdrawal models of teaching support.
- Liaise with external agencies/professionals as necessary, in partnership with the class teacher.
- Maintain a list of pupils who are on the Continuum of Support.



## **Parents**

The role of parents to work in good faith and in partnership with the school is considered vital to meeting additional needs of pupils and to ensuring that they reach their potential.

### **Centralising Data for Support**

Due to their confidential nature, all reports e.g. psychological, medical, occupational/speech therapy for children on the Continuum of Support are kept in a locked centralised area. A copy of a report will be made available to a class/Support Teacher who is working with the pupil in question. Pupil data is retained by the school in line with the school's Data Protection Policy, available at [www.stfintansns.ie](http://www.stfintansns.ie)

This policy will be reviewed as necessary by the Board of Management.  
This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management in March 2024.

Chairperson:		Martin Mc Inerney
Principal:		Cora Farrell
Date:	