

# Special Educational Needs Policy

ST PAUL'S SECONDARY SCHOOL POLICY DOCUMENT				
Policy Owner: <b>St. Paul's Secondary School</b>				
Policy Status: <b>Final</b>				
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Rev 1	17-09-2014		1 year	17-09-2015

## Section 1:

### St Paul's Secondary School Mission Statement

St. Paul's Secondary School provides an inclusive climate of learning based on the key value of **respect** within a nurturing and stimulating educational setting.

We are a secondary school of the community for the community. Each student is expected to strive to fulfil his or her potential. Each person is encouraged to develop personally, academically, spiritually, socially and culturally.

**"When we aspire, believe and achieve, together we can succeed."**

### St Paul's Secondary School Ethos

St. Paul's Secondary School is a Catholic voluntary co-educational secondary school under the Trusteeship of the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. St Paul's is a welcoming and inclusive school. It is the secondary school of the community, for the community. It is the natural extension of the family with brothers and sisters, neighbours and relations learning, sharing and growing together.

The school strives to maintain and promote an atmosphere of Christian care, concern and respect where our students grow into well-adjusted men and women. The school has a strong Christian tradition, in which the Sisters of Mercy have had, and continue to have, an important role.

Inbuilt structures and procedures in the daily life of the school offer the students opportunities to develop personal initiative and responsibility, together with a questioning mind, which will help them assess, with a critical eye, the wide and varied values of the world they live in today. In school they also learn the importance of personal commitment, punctuality, regular attendance, planning for the future and working as a team.

At St Paul's the holistic development of each student is supported, promoted, encouraged and celebrated. On completion of their education students will be prepared for life, further education, work and the varied and exciting challenges of adult life.

In preparation for life, students at St Paul's will be taught essential habits, skills and values. Christian values and the key principles of "respect" and "doing one's best" will remain central to what we are and all we do.

Through its curriculum, teachers and timetable, the school will provide a comprehensive education for its students. Subjects will be offered at all levels and programmes and specific courses of study will be tailored to the students' needs. A wide range of additional academic opportunities will be afforded to students. Support, advice and guidance on further education and careers will be extensive.

Through its unique atmosphere, the school will help students develop into well-adjusted men and women. Through its pastoral care and guidance, students and their families will be supported through difficult times. The provision of physical education, sports and the promotion of healthy living will remain paramount. Through extra-curricular, subject and programme related activities students will have many opportunities to showcase their talents, perform or experience the arts. The School Charter sets out the conditions and the expectations for all the school partners to achieve St Paul's Mission Statement through the school ethos.

## **Section 2:**

This policy applies to all students attending St. Paul's Secondary School and those who have special educational needs. The students who fall under the remit of the SEN team fall under two broad categories: low incidence and high incidence students.

The specific exceptionalities catered for to date include:

- Learning support students
- Borderline/Mild General Learning Disability
- Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties –ADD/ADHD

- Specific Learning Difficulty – eg Dyslexia
- Sensory difficulties (hearing and visual impairments)
- Physical difficulties – eg Dyspraxia
- Moderate General Learning Disability
- Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorder (e.g. Aspergers)

### **Policy Statement:**

This policy is drafted in the context of the specific provisions and definitions with regard to children with disabilities and special educational needs, the statutory requirements placed on schools and Boards of Managements by:

- The Education Act 1998
- The Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
- The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004

This policy is drafted in the context of Circular Letters as outlined below: M10/94, S70/00, S11/00, M37/03, PPT06/04, M1/05, PP1/05, TESO7/05, TESO8/05, TESO9/05, PPT12/05, M14/05 and M23/05.

This policy is drafted in the context of guidelines published by the Special Educational Needs Support Service.

This policy is drafted in consideration of the Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill 2003 as well as guidelines on Individual Education Plan Process 2006.

### **Aim of the Policy:**

As set out in The Education Act 1998, The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004 St. Paul's Secondary School aims to:

- Give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children who have a disability or who have other special educational needs, as they relate to education.
- Provide, as far as is practicable and having regard to the resources available, a level and quality of education appropriate to the needs and abilities of all students in the school.
- Ensure that students with special educational needs are educated in an inclusive environment, as far as possible.
- Affirm that students with special educational needs have the same right to avail of, and benefit from education as students who do not have those needs.

- Provide for the involvement of parents in the education of their children and in the decision making process in relation to their children.
- Co-operate and work closely with the National Council for Special Educational Needs (NCSE) and other agencies with regard to the education of students with special educational needs.
- Ensure that students with special educational needs are identified and provided for in a fair and equitable manner so that their learning potential and their sense of self worth and dignity is developed and respected.
- Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the special educational needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.
- Ensure that special educational needs are not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.
- Ensure that students with special educational needs are offered a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Set high standards for students with special educational needs and provide them with appropriate guidance, encouraging them to achieve to their full potential.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at home and at home.
- Co-ordinate the advice, guidance and support of other agencies in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Ensure the effective and efficient use of resources.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of practice in support of students with special educational needs.

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### **Section 3:**

#### **Transfer from Primary School**

Prior to entry to St. Paul's the Year Head for First Years and the Special Needs Coordinator visit or contact the feeder Primary Schools. The school sees this liaison as an important step in ensuring proper identification of students with special educational needs and the continuity of provision for them. Where possible, visits are arranged for students and their parents with special educational needs prior to their transfer to St. Paul's. Information received from the Primary Schools and parents coupled with the results of the New

Group Reading Test and the Maths Age Test help the school identify those students who may need additional support at Secondary School level.

A student who has been sanctioned Resource hours by the Department of Education at Primary School will not automatically have this entitlement on transfer to Secondary school. A new application must be made. Not all applications are successful.

A 'buddy/mentoring-system' operates in the school, which gives Meitheal students the responsibility to team up with the incoming First Years.

All First Year teachers are briefed on matters relating to the students they are going to teach or come into contact with. Clearly the extent to which individual teachers are given confidential information is a sensitive matter. It is however important that teachers have as much information as possible regarding the students they teach if they are to contribute towards the best possible learning environment for them.

### **Students transferring into other Year Groups**

When a student is accepted into St. Paul's to join a year group other than First Year information is sought from their previous school. The Principal/Deputy Principal are usually responsible for this. This information is passed to the Year Head and the Special Needs co-ordinator if appropriate.

The school's resource allocation is student dependent and is variable on an annual basis.

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## **Section 4:**

### **Role of the Special Needs co-ordinator:**

The SEN co-ordinator is responsible for the overall co-ordination of Resource/Learning Support within the school. The SEN co-ordinator duties are as follows

- Assists with arrangements for the successful transfer of students from their primary school to St. Paul's Secondary School and in gathering information about students, including those with special educational needs, before this transfer.
- Co-ordinates SEN provision in the school
- Liaises with parents/guardians of SEN students and prospective students

- Liaises with NEPS psychologists regarding assessment of priority students
- Communicates with relevant staff regarding essential information regarding SEN students
- Facilitates and chairs SEN department meetings
- Provides updates and details of all matters SEN to the School Authorities
- Liaises with the SENO in relation to all matters SEN including; assessment reports, learning support/resource provision, SNA access and applications to the NCSE
- Maintains and updates SEN files as well as the yearly SEN Register
- Administers and maintains records of assessment tests carried out throughout the school year
- Makes application for Reasonable Accommodation to the SEC
- Processes Exemptions from Irish
- Liaises with the School Authorities regarding timetabling
- Strives to develop a climate of confidentiality regarding the sensitive information of all the partners involved in SEN
- Liaises with school management regarding specific and whole school professional development.

### **Reasonable Accommodations (RACE)**

The Special Educational Needs co-ordinator, in consultation with other members of the SEN Department, identifies those students in need of reasonable accommodation in school and state examinations. Psychological reports that recommend reasonable accommodation for certain students must be acted on and applications forwarded to the 'Reasonable Accommodation' section of the State Examinations Commission.

In-school assessment will continue to be administered to those students identified as potential candidates requiring reasonable accommodation. Applications for reasonable accommodation will be made for those students that meet the criteria necessary for additional supports.

### **Liaison with outside Agencies:**

The Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) liaises closely with the Special Educational Needs co-ordinator and facilitates the delivery and co-ordination of educational services to children with SEN. The SENO also processes application forms for resources for SEN Students to the NCSE and advises parents/guardians regarding their son's/daughter's needs.

The National Psychological Service (NEPS) provide psychological assessments of students and recommendations on how best to address strengths and weaknesses identified. The service also advises as to how best employ

resources and strategies in the classroom, and school environment in general, to benefit SEN students.

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provides support for students experiencing difficulties of a behavioural/emotional nature and provides advice and recommendations on how best to address those difficulties in a school environment.

Other Agencies include the Health Service Executive (HSE), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the Special Education Support Service (SESS), the Second Level Support Services (SLSS) and the Dyslexia Association of Ireland (DAI).

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## **Section 5**

### **Role of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA)**

The Special Needs Assistant provides care assistance to named students who have special educational needs. They make a valuable contribution to the schools capacity to provide inclusive education to these students.

The Special Educational Needs Department devises an appropriate strategy plan for a student with special educational needs. The SNA takes care of the implementation of this plan.

The Special Needs Assistant plays an important role in the health and safety of the student and in their social, emotional and educational development. It is important that the Special Needs Assistant supports student participation in school life without developing a culture of dependency.

The duties of the Special Needs Assistants involve tasks of a non teaching nature such as:

- Attending both Staff and Departmental meetings when appropriate.
- Assisting / escorting students on school trips.
- Giving special assistance as necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. helping special needs students with typing, writing or other use of equipment.
- Assisting with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene and being mindful of health and safety needs of the student.
- Assisting with reading/scribing examinations (if appropriate).
- Assisting the teacher in the supervision of pupils during assembly and in movement from one classroom to another.
- Accompanying individual or small groups who may be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom.

- General assistance of the subject teacher of a non-teaching nature. Special Needs Assistants may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class.
- Participation with school development planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school development process.
- Engagement with parents of special needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required.
- Other appropriate duties as may be determined by the needs of the pupils and the school. Special Needs Assistants may be re-assigned to other appropriate work when special needs students are absent or when particularly urgent work demands arise.
- Special Needs Assistants are expected to treat all matters relating to school business and their work as strictly confidential

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## **Section 6**

### **Role of the Teacher**

The class teacher has a key role in bringing about the successful inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream classes. The class teacher has primary responsibility for the educational progress of all students in his/her class. It is particularly important that all class teachers create a classroom environment that accommodates and takes account of learning and physical difficulties. Whether students are taught in mixed ability or streamed classes it is expected that teachers will implement differentiated approaches for teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that the skills of all students including SEN students are catered for.

Class teachers will make themselves aware of the special educational needs of students in their classes. Reading Age, Maths Age plus a mini profile of all pupils with a psychological assessment is made available to all teachers at the first staff meeting of the new school year and is available through the co-ordinator on request. Teachers take steps to inform themselves of the special needs of any student in their classes and to bring any concerns regarding such a student to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator.

The class teacher also plays an important role in the early identification of students with SEN. The class teacher is alert to the possibility of general and specific learning difficulties and brings their concerns to the attention of the SEN team. A key element of successful SEN provision is a high level of consultation and co-operation between the class teacher and the SEN team.



A class teacher, form teacher or Year Head can refer any student they are concerned about to the SEN Co-ordinator, who will begin a broader profile. This first step in the screening process allows the SEN team to identify the nature of SEN being experienced. It is during this time that the learning, emotional, behavioural and social needs of the student are evaluated. The co-ordinator will gather all the relevant information and after consultation with school management, the parents and the pupil may apply to the NCSE for support.

The academic progress of students throughout the school rests in the first instance with the mainstream class teacher. In order to ensure that as a school we meet the needs of all our special educational needs students, all teachers are encouraged to:

- Be aware of the School's policy and procedures for dealing with students with special educational needs.
- Seek advice from the SEN Co-ordinator regarding students with special educational needs.
- Take responsibility for their own continuous professional development particularly with regard to common difficulties e.g. Dyslexia.
- 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 SEN Co-ordinator.
- Support/encourage independence in the student. This is particularly important for Senior Cycle students.