

Murhur N. S.

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Special Educational Needs Policy

Context

Murhur National School caters for children from Junior Infants to 6th Class and is under the patronage of the Bishop of Kerry. The school currently has three mainstream class teachers and one Special Education Teacher (SET) which includes a teaching principal. The school currently has one Special Needs Assistants (SNA).

The allocation of both Special Education Teachers and Special Needs Assistants is subject to review. The purpose of this policy document is to provide information to school personnel and parents on how we organise provision for teaching and support of children with special educational needs. The term special educational needs is broad and includes children who have difficulty acquiring literacy and/or numeracy skills, children with difficulties with fine or gross motor skills, children who have English as an additional language (if that impacts on their progress) and children who have diagnosed disabilities. In this document, SEN can be taken to be special educational needs in this broad sense.

SEN now encompasses what were previously termed Learning Support Teachers, Resource Teachers and teachers for children with English as an Additional Language (EAL teachers).

The policy is based on Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (Department of Education & Skills).

Aims of SEN Support

Our school is committed to helping our pupils to achieve their full potential. The provision of a quality system of SEN support teaching is integral to this commitment. Through the implementation of our SEN policy we aim to:

- support the inclusion of children with SEN in our school
- develop positive attitudes about school and learning in our children

- ensure that the Staged Approach/Continuum of Support is implemented (see below)
- optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable children with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school (Guidelines for Schools, p15)
- enable children to participate in the full curriculum
- support appropriate differentiation in the classroom
- support children's development both socially and emotionally
- enable children to understand themselves as learners
- involve parents in supporting their children
- promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole-school policies on learning support for our pupils
- promote early intervention programmes designed to enhance learning and prevent/reduce difficulties in learning.

Principles of SEN Support

The provision of SEN support in our school is based on the following principles:

1. Quality of teaching.
2. Effective whole-school policies.
3. Direction of resources towards children in greatest need.
4. Implementation of a staged approach to support provision at Class Support/School Support/School Support Plus levels.
5. Provision of the model(s) of intervention appropriate for the child, including the withdrawal model, in-class support model, individual or group work, etc.

Continuum of Support – Staged Approach

Stage 1. Classroom Support

If a class teacher or parent has concerns about the academic, physical, social or emotional development of a child, the class teacher will then construct a simple, individual plan of support to be implemented in the normal class setting. **This plan will form the 1st instructional page of the child's Continuum of Support** and will be based on screening measures administered by the teacher. The plan will be reviewed after each instructional term (using the Review Page from the Continuum of Support document). If the plan is working well for the child it may be decided to continue with it. If

insufficient progress is made and the child is still having difficulty then Stage 2 (School Support) is implemented.

Stage 2. School Support

If further intervention is deemed necessary (after further diagnostic testing by the Learning Support teacher) and the child is to receive supplementary teaching at School Support Level then a letter of consent will be sent to the parents by the Learning Support teacher in question. (Template of letter kept in red SEN folder and in document folder in Aladdin).

The class teacher and Learning Support teacher then draw up a plan of appropriate learning outcomes for the child. **This plan will form the 2nd instructional page of the child's Continuum of Support** and will be implemented in conjunction with the child's Classroom Support Plan (1st Page). The child's parents/guardians will be informed of this plan, invited to contribute and asked to sign it. This plan will be reviewed at the end of each instructional term and if significant concerns remain after a number of reviews, it may be necessary to involve outside agencies such as NEPS or the HSE. (Stage 3)

Stage 3. School Support Plus

The school may formally request a consultation from other professionals outside the school in respect of children who fail to make sufficient progress after supplementary teaching or the implementation of a behavioural programme, as appropriate. Such professional advice is sought from psychologists, speech therapists, audiologists, occupational therapists etc. This is carried out in consultation with and with the permission of the child's parents/guardians. Following the consultation, the class teacher, Learning Support teacher, parents and outside professional (if available) will draw up a Learning Programme for the child. **This plan will form the 3rd instructional page of the child's Continuum of Support.**

In case of children identified at an early age as having significant special educational needs, intervention at Stage 3 will be necessary on their entry to school.

Support in the classroom will be an essential component of any learning programme devised for such children and primary responsibility for the child will remain with the class teacher in consultation with the designated Learning Support teacher.

Note: The 'Log of Actions' in the Continuum of Support will be added to as appropriate (after a decision has been made or a meeting held). These additions will be made by the Class Teacher or the Learning Support teacher.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of supporting learning is a collaborative responsibility shared by all the school community: The Board of Management, Principal Teacher, Parents, Class Teachers, Learning Support teachers, SNAs, Children and external bodies and agencies.

Board of Management

The Board of Management will:

- be informed of the reviewed SEN policy and any updates to it.
- ratify the SEN policy.
- Ensure that satisfactory classroom accommodation and teaching resources are available.
- provide secure facilities for the storage of records relating to children in receipt of SEN support.

Principal Teacher

The Principal Teacher will have overall responsibility for the school's provision for children with SEN. The principal keeps a record of referrals made to NEPS and other outside services.

At the beginning of each school year, the Principal meets with the NEPS psychologist to formulate a plan for the year, including assessments of pupils and professional supports for teachers.

Some of the duties associated with this responsibility may be delegated to the deputy principal and other members of staff as appropriate.

Class Teacher

The Class Teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all children in his/her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching. (Guidelines 2017)

The Class Teacher will-

- Provide effective teaching and learning opportunities
- Support the identification of learning difficulties
- Provide Classroom Support/Stage 1
- Log actions in the Support Plan
- Communicate with parents/guardians

- Draw up Classroom Support Plans (Stage 1 Continuum of Support) “*Interventions with children at stages 2 and 3 should include a classroom support plan to ensure that the children’s needs are met for the whole school day*” (Guidelines 2017 p7)
- Collaborate with the SET in the development of a Support Plan for each child who is in receipt of supplementary teaching at School Support/School Support Plus Level on the Continuum, by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve those targets. A key role of successful support is a high level of consultation and co-operation between the Class Teacher and the Special Education Teacher.

Central to this consultation is the development, implementation and review of support plans. This consultation will be achieved through formal timetabling at least once per instructional term, and through informal consultation as the need arises.

Special Education Teachers

The central roles of the special education teacher will be to

- a) support the class teacher in optimising teaching and learning opportunities and
- b) provide specialised teaching to those children with identified special educational needs. Special education teacher responsibilities will consist of both teaching and non-teaching duties.

These will include:

- Providing supplementary teaching commensurate with the child’s particular and individual needs.
- Researching the child’s learning difficulty/SEN, to become familiar with their needs and their preferred learning methods.
- Being familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and to meet a variety of needs (Guidelines 2017 p.13).
- Developing a Support Plan for each child who is selected for supplementary teaching, in consultation with Class Teachers and parents.
- Maintaining a Short-Term Plan and Progress Record, or equivalent, for each individual or group of children withdrawn for support teaching. Maintaining a Short-Term and Progress Record (together with the Class Teacher) for in-class support.
- Administering a range of formal and informal assessments and maintaining records of the outcomes of those assessments. This will involve:

- Conducting an initial Diagnostic Assessment of each child who has been identified as having low achievement and/or a learning difficulty, based on results of an appropriate screening measure and record the findings of the assessment in the child's Support Plan.

 - Monitoring the ongoing progress of each child in receipt of supplementary teaching in relation to the attainment of agreed learning targets and short-term objectives that arise from them and recording the observations in the Short-Term Plan and Progress Record, or equivalent.

 - Reviewing the progress of each child at the end of an instructional term and recording it on the child's Support Plan.
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- Providing supplementary teaching in English and/or Mathematics to children who experience low achievement and/or learning difficulties at School Support/School Support Plus (as per selection criteria). Supplementary teaching will also be provided for children whose social skills, gross/fine motor skills and English language skills need further development (EAL).
 - Logging actions in the Support Plan.
 - Delivering early intervention programmes
 - Assisting the implementation of whole-school procedures for the selection of children for supplementary teaching.
 - Contributing to the development of SEN policy.
 - Providing advice to the Class Teacher (if requested).
 - Meeting with parents of children who are in receipt of support teaching where a concern is ongoing.
 - Liaising with external agencies such as speech and language therapists etc., and implementing suitable recommendations, wherever possible.
 - Implementing school policies on preventing learning difficulties, screening children for learning difficulties, interpreting the outcomes of diagnostic assessments and providing supplementary teaching, where it is deemed necessary.

Role of SNA

The role of an SNA will be to carry out duties based on the care needs of the child. The tasks associated with these duties can be of a primary or secondary nature. (Circular 0030/2014)

The **primary care support tasks** may include:

- Assistance with feeding
- Administration of medicine.
- Assistance with toileting and general hygiene (including catheterisation).
- Assistance with mobility and orientation.
- Assisting teachers to provide supervision in the class, playground and school grounds, and at recreation, assembly and dispersal times.
- Assisting children while at play as appropriate.
- Provision of non-nursing care needs associated with specific medical conditions.
- Care needs requiring frequent interventions including withdrawal of a child from a classroom when essential.
- Assistance with moving and lifting of children, operation of hoists and equipment.
- Assistance with severe communication difficulties including enabling curriculum access for children with physical disabilities or sensory needs and those with significant and identified social and emotional difficulties.

The **secondary care support tasks** may include:

- Preparation and tidying of workspaces and classrooms or assisting a child who is not physically able to perform such tasks; to prepare and tidy a workspace, to present materials, to display work, or to transition from one lesson activity to another.
- Assistance with the development of Personal Pupil Plans (PPP) for children with Special Educational Needs, with a particular focus on developing a care plan to meet the care needs of the child concerned and the review of such plans.
- Assistance with maintaining a journal and care monitoring system for children including details of attendance and care needs.

- Planning for activities and classes where there may be additional care requirements associated with particular activities.
- Attending meetings with Parents, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENO); National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS); or school staff meetings with the agreement and guidance of Class Teacher/Principal.
- Assistance with enabling a child to access therapy or psycho-educational programmes such as anger management or social skills classes, under the direction of appropriate personnel.
- Assistance to attend or participate in out of school activities: walks, or visits, where such assistance cannot be provided by teaching staff.

Role of Parents/Guardians

The central role of parents/guardians of children with SEN is the same as all parents/guardians, i.e. to support the work of the school and to optimise teaching and learning opportunities for their child at home.

Role of Children

The role of the child with SEN will be that of active participant in their own learning; the extent and nature of this will depend on their strengths and needs.

Role of External Bodies and Agencies

Our school liaises with external professionals such as NEPS Psychologists, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Support Service, the HSE (Health Service Executive), Early Intervention Teams, School Age Teams, Tusla, Visiting Teachers for children with vision impairment, Visiting Teachers for children with hearing loss, and the Inspectorate. We acknowledge that the needs of many children span both health and education services. We therefore liaise with and contribute to health-led assessment and delivery of interventions and facilitate meetings between parents and various support services. We also endeavour to incorporate relevant recommendations from health professionals in developing support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support.

Prevention and Early Intervention

Prevention Strategies

- Differentiation of the curriculum by the mainstream class teacher to cater for individual strengths and needs.
- Development and implementation of agreed approaches to the teaching of English and Mathematics to ensure progression and continuity from class to class, including the *Aistear* programme in the Infant classes, levelled readers from Junior Infants – 6th Class).
- Careful development of phonological awareness, rhyming skills and oral language skills, before formal reading of words and books.
- The use of concrete materials as much as possible and as appropriate.
- Ongoing structured observation and assessment of the language, literacy and numeracy skills of children in the Infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties.
- Class-based early intervention by the class teacher focusing on the provision of additional individualised support, as and when required.
- Provision of additional support in language development/early literacy/early mathematical skills to children who need it.
- Support for children experiencing social/emotional difficulties and problems with concentration.
- Provision of Assistive Technology as appropriate.
- Promotion of parental involvement through their attendance at induction meetings for parents/guardians of incoming Junior Infants and the arrangement of formal and informal parent/teacher meetings.

Early Intervention Strategies

Early intervention programmes may be provided by the class Teacher and/or the Support Teacher, in accordance with the Staged Approach (NEPS Continuum).

Collaboration and consultation between the Class Teachers and the Support Teachers, should identify children who may be in need of early intervention.

Teacher observation and professional opinion will be given due consideration in the selection of children for early intervention programmes at Classroom Support/School Support level.

Early intervention programmes will include -

- Implementation of an English language programme for Junior Infant and Senior Infant children who have English as an additional language, with emphasis on basic vocabulary. Intensive language programme for such children in more senior classes with emphasis on basic vocabulary and the language of Maths. This acknowledges the literacy skills already acquired in mother tongue.
- Active learning programme for all Junior Infant children with specific emphasis on oral language development, underpinned by the principles of the *Aistear* programme and the new Language Curriculum.
- Introduction of Occupational Therapy (OT) groups to focus on fine and gross motor skills if required. This group will be withdrawn by the Special Education Teacher.
- Early intervention literacy and language support programme (*Guided Reading using levelled Readers*) in Junior Infant to 2nd classes daily.
- Withdrawal of children to a support teaching room, in-class support, team teaching, group work and individual support will be provided, as appropriate and if it is in a child's best interest.

Identifying and Selecting Children for Additional Teaching Support

Children with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest level of supports.

Selection criteria

The following criteria will be used by our school to select children for supplementary teaching in line with the new model of Special Education Teaching (Circular 13/2107).

1. Children previously in receipt of "Resource hours" who continue to experience significant learning difficulties.
2. Children scoring at or below the 10th percentile on standardised assessments in Literacy and Maths.
3. Children scoring at or below the 12th percentile on standardised assessments in Literacy and Maths (to allow for a margin of error).

4. Children diagnosed as having Low Incidence Learning Disabilities since 2017.
5. Children diagnosed as having High Incidence Learning Disabilities.
6. Children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) and whose English needs further support.
7. Early intervention in literacy and/or Maths - Infant class children who continue to experience difficulties in early literacy skills, despite interventions made by the Class Teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support. The class teacher will have opened a Support Plan and recorded the interventions in it.
8. Children scoring at or below STEN 4 (30th percentile) on standardised assessments in literacy and/or Maths and who continue to experience difficulty, despite interventions made by the Class Teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support. The class teacher will have opened a Support Plan and recorded the interventions in it.
9. Children experiencing serious difficulties with oral language or social or emotional development or application to learning, despite interventions made by the Class Teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support. The class teacher will have opened a Support Plan and recorded the interventions in it.
10. Transition to Post-Primary School. This is also supported by the School Completion Programme and the Home, School, Community Liaison (HSCL) teacher.
11. Exceptionally Able/Gifted Children.

Interventions will be made in the first instance by the Class Teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support. The class teacher will have opened a Support Plan and

recorded the interventions in it. Support from Centre for Talented Youth Ireland (CTYI) is accessed as appropriate.

Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching.

- At the end of each instructional block/term the progress of each child who is in receipt of support teaching will be evaluated following consultation with the child's class teacher and where appropriate, the child's parents/guardians.
- A decision will be made regarding their continued level of support and revised targets will be set in their Support Plan.
- The school may decide to discontinue supplementary teaching with some children when satisfactory progress has been made and targets have been met.
- The school may also decide to discontinue supplementary teaching with some children who are now performing above the percentile laid down in the selection criteria for receiving support; however, if both the class teacher and support teacher feel such a child needs scaffolding to maintain this standard then continued supplementary teaching may be offered if places are available in the appropriate group.

Monitoring Progress

- **The Support Review Record** on the Continuum of Support will be completed by the Support Teacher in collaboration with the Class Teacher. This will be carried out at the end of each instructional period. The completed review will be saved in Aladdin (our school Administration System).
- **Self Reflection** (by the child) – as part of the Continuum of Support Review Record.
- **Weekly Tests** if applicable (eg. Spellings/Tables).
- **Termly Assessments** if applicable (teacher designed or from publishers).
- **Standardised Tests at end of year** (1st – 6th) English and Maths.
- **Senior Infant end of year test** –Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST).
- **Ongoing structured observation** and assessment of the language, literacy and numeracy skills of the children in the Infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties.

Record Keeping

- Class Teachers will keep a record of teacher designed tests, end of term tests and checklists in an Assessment Folder for their class.
- A file for each child in the class is kept in a locked filing cabinet in the principal's office and is made available to each teacher as the child moves through the school.
- Diagnostic Assessments and other checklists administered by the Special Education Teacher will be put in the child's file.
- Continuum of Support documents for Children with SEN are also kept in the child's file (a copy of relevant pages for the Support Teacher).
- Personal Pupil Plans for children with SNA access will also be kept in the child's file.
- Psychological Reports that are active at any given time are kept in a locked cabinet in the Principal's office. Copies may be held by the class teacher in the child's file.
- Results of Completed Standardised Tests will be uploaded to Aladdin where possible and a copy of each will be filed in the Assessment folders in the office. The Standardised Tests currently used in our school are – Micra T (Reading) and SIGMA T (Maths). The MIST (Senior Infant Test) is also administered.
- End of Year school Report will be issued to parents/guardians in June. These reports are saved in Aladdin.
- Monthly Reports from the Special Education Teacher will be sent to the Principal. These reports outline the work undertaken by the SET with groups or individual children.

Liaising with Parents/Communicating Information

- Class teacher meets with parents/guardians initially to discuss concerns and outline supports available in the school.
- Special Education Teacher and Class Teacher meet with parents to agree a School Support Plan for the child.
- Special Education Teacher liaises with parents of children in receipt of supplementary teaching to demonstrate methodologies that could be useful at home to further the child's learning.

- Parents are encouraged to become involved in their child's learning. Activities are organised throughout the year to support this.
- Parent Teacher Meetings are held in November for Junior Infants to 6th Class.
- An Open Day for incoming Junior Infants takes place in February of each year.
- An end-of-year report goes home in June each year. Opportunities to discuss this report are made available before the end of term.

Timetabling

- Supplementary teaching that children receive is in addition to their regular class programme in English and Maths, in so far as is practicable.
- Co-teaching, where two teachers work together to plan, organise, instruct and make assessments on the same group of students, sharing the same classroom can operate during English and Maths times in class. If deemed more beneficial to the group being taught by the Special Education Teacher, they can be withdrawn to a quiet space. Shortage of space in mainstream classrooms may also determine this.
- In so far as is practicable children should not miss out on the same curricular area each time they receive supplementary teaching.
- The Support Teaching Team will review the timetable at the end of each instructional term/block.

Attendance

- An attendance record of children who are withdrawn to the SEN rooms will be kept by each Support Teacher.

Monitoring and Reviewing the SEN Policy

- The Principal and Deputy Principal will monitor and review this policy.
This review will be initiated by the SEN Co-ordinator.

SEN Policy Success Criteria

A whole school approach to the implementation of our SEN policy will:

- ensure that children with SEN gain access to a broad, balanced curriculum and have opportunity of access to an appropriate education.

- develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning among our pupils.
- improve standards of academic performance and achievement.
- enhance parental involvement in supporting their child's learning.
- increase collaboration between school personnel.

The achievement of these success criteria will be assessed through feedback from teachers, children and parents/guardians; child's achievements and ongoing analysis of children's academic performance and attainment of personal targets.

Acknowledgements

- Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (Department of Education & Skills)
- "Managing the Transition to the New Model of Special Education" (Dr. Mairéad De Búrca / INTO 2017)
- *Circular 30/2014 Special Needs Assistants*
- *Circular 13/2017 Special Educational Needs – New Model*
- <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/a-new-model-for-allocating-special-education-teachers-to-mainstream-schools.pdf>

Useful Websites

- Department of Education & 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

Policy Ratification

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Murhur National School at its meeting held on Friday 24th April 2020.

Signed: *John O'Sullivan* Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: *Maria O'Regan* Principal

Date: *24th April 2020*

