

Special Educational Needs Policy

&

Learning Support Programme

A Continuum of Support



Practices outlined in this policy will be implemented throughout the academic year 2017/2019

A review of the policy and practices will be undertaken and amendments made as appropriate.

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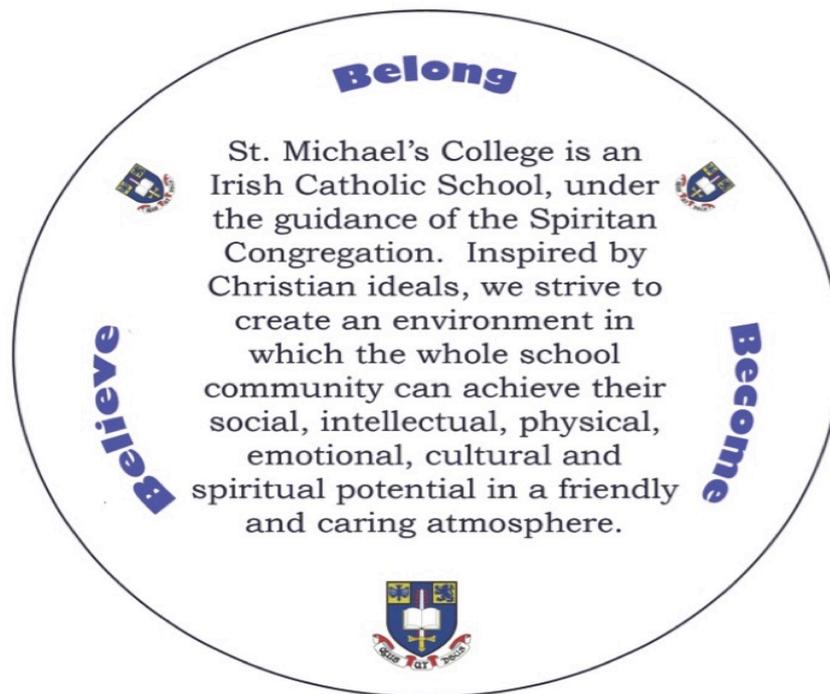
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1. Mission Statement

St. Michael's College Mission Statement



1.1 Introduction

“The aim of inclusion is to ensure that all individuals have equal rights, opportunities and access to all aspects of everyday living” (Mittler, 2000)

This document will outline the whole school policy on Special Educational Needs in St. Michael's College and offer an overview of the whole school approach to inclusion with particular reference to special educational needs within the college. It will offer a context for this planning underpinned by relevant legislation. It will outline current planning and practice in the Special Educational Needs Dept. It will note recommendations to further promote a whole school approach to the inclusion of students with SEN within St Michael's College.

1.2 The Concept of Inclusion

According to Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006, the concept of inclusion has come to mean that schools should concern themselves with increasing the participation and broad educational achievement of all historically marginalised groups. The concept of an inclusive school is a compelling one if schools are to be considered a microcosm of and preparation for the wider society they inhabit. Inclusion has been described simply in terms of the student; *“as a place in your local community, a seat in your local school, in a mainstream classroom, where any child can have access to the full curriculum and participate fully in that curriculum, irrespective of ethnicity, ability, social class, gender, race or need.”* (Frederickson, N. & Cline T., 2002)

Inclusive education is a complex and living concept that describes the organisational, curricular, social and ethical structures through which a school tries to meet the diverse needs of *all* the students in its local community, irrespective of disability, need, social class, ethnic diversity or belief. This is a challenging ambition. Indeed, (Booth et al. 2000: 121) point out that it is not possible to create an inclusive school as a fixed structure. Rather that it is a constant process which is being worked towards by all the stakeholders in the school, students, family, teachers and community. This is a process that demands a constant review of all the structures in the school to ensure that all groups who have historically been marginalised are fully participative in school life:

“..in our view, inclusion is a set of never ending processes...it requires schools to engage in a critical examination of what can be done to increase the learning and participation of the diversity of students within the school” (Booth et al. 2000: 121).

1.3 Special Educational Needs

In terms of students with Special Educational Needs there has been a growing awareness of social justice, based on equality and the concept of need, (Kinsella, 2009) and it is now accepted that students with special educational needs should be included more wholly into school life. The social model of disability suggests that it is the societal structures themselves that are discriminatory (Campbell & Oliver, 1996). So, the responsibility shifts to wider society to accommodate difference and remove these obstacles. The school community is a microcosm of wider society.

1.4 The Irish Context

In an Irish context, it is relevant to sketch a brief outline of the main developments in educational policy and practice in recent years. For our definition of special educational

needs in an Irish education context, we must look to The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, (EPSEN) 2004 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.”

Within the last decade, informed by evolving pedagogy and policy regarding SEN education, Ireland has endorsed worldwide trends to promote more inclusive forms of education. This has “evolved out of a critique of policies and practices in integration” (McDonnell, 2003) The Special Education Review Committee Report (1993) was the first serious attempt to address the area since the 1960's. The Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, 1996, was pivotal in increasing national awareness. When the Education Act of 1998 was made law, all schools and teachers had to take legal responsibility for all children, including those with any SEN needs and disabilities. The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004, created local support structures to allow schools deliver SEN provision. It also refers to education as a right: “A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs. The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) is the most significant piece of legislation in the history of the State in relation to the education of children with special needs.

All policies and planning regarding Special Educational Needs in St. Michael's College is informed and guided by this wider context.

2. St. Michael's College Policy

(The development of an inclusive policy towards students with Additional Needs.)

2.1 Overview of school context:

St Michael's College is a Roman Catholic school owned by the Congregation of the Holy Spirit Order in Ireland and conducted under the patronage of the Des Places Educational Association. (DEA). St Michael's College is a fee-paying voluntary Catholic school for boys. The college prepares pupils for the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations. A Board of Management made up of nominees of the patrons, parents and teachers manages the school. The current pupil enrolment is 616 with a teaching staff of 55. The Principal is Mr. T. Kelleher who also acts as Secretary to the Board of Management. The Deputy-Principal is Mr. Aidan O'Donnell.

The school offers a programme of 16 subjects in Junior Cycle and 19 subjects in Senior Cycle. The current staff allocation of teachers to the school is 52. The school has a library, computer room and wireless Wi-Fi throughout the building. There are data-projectors in all classrooms. ICT is widely used to communicate with students and parents; gmail.com, googleclassroom.com and other platforms are used to support student learning. The college offers an extensive extra-curricular programme including cultural, sporting and academic pursuits. It is well resourced for sport, with several playing fields, AstroTurf, a swimming pool and gym and sports hall. There is also a music room with a recording studio. There is an active Parents' Council, Students' Council and a Past Pupils Union. Each operates under its own constitution to support the work of the school.

St. Michael's College operates within the context and parameters of the Dept. of Education and Science's regulations and programmes. The College takes into account the rights of the Patron, as set out in the Education Act as well as the funding and resources available to the college. **The school supports the principles of inclusiveness, particularly with reference to the enrolment of children with a disability or other special educational needs.** The school likewise recognises the principle of access and participation in the school and parental choice in the area of enrolment. It respects the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society.

2.2 Admissions Policy

Application forms are available from the College's Administration Office. Application forms must be completed and returned to the Admissions Office at the school address. All

applicants will receive an acknowledgement. Parents / Guardians are requested to confirm their continued interest in a place in the College when their child is in fifth class.

The Enrolment Policy is set out in accordance with the provisions of the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018. Under this Act the Minister will also bring into operation the section which provides the Minister with a power, after a process of consultation with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the Board of Management and the Patron of a school, to compel a school to make additional provision for the education of children with special educational needs. This power will come into effect on Monday 3rd December 2018.

The enrolment policy is set out in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998. It is expected that all prospective students will subscribe to the spirit and ethos of St Michael's College and the CSSP Educational Philosophy.

2.3 Special Educational Needs Policy

The Special Educational Needs policy at St. Michael's College Senior School will comply with the following definition from the EPSEN Act (2004)

“A special educational need means, in relation to a person, 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...”

Students with SEN are

- Students with General Learning Difficulties
- Students with average and above average ability who experience an SLD
- Gifted Students
- Students with a physical handicap or sensory impairment
- Students with a social, emotional, behavioural or communication disorder
- Students for whom English is a second language
- Students whose education has been interrupted for a significant period.

Where applicants with Special Educational Needs are eligible to attend St Michael's College, the College Management will request an up to date copy of the applicant's medical and/or psychological report / Individual Educational Report or an immediate assessment. This is in order to assist the school in establishing the educational and training needs of the child relevant to his disability or Special Needs and to profile the support services required. On the basis of the relevant information the College will assess how his needs can be met and, if further resources are required, the Department of Education and Science will be requested to provide them. The Principal may meet the applicant's parents to discuss the child's needs and the school's capacity to meet them.

2.4 A History of SEN/Resource in St. Michael's College

To meet the requirements of the Education Act (1998) and the recommendations of The EPSEN Act (2004), A special educational needs/resource department was formally

established in the school ten years ago (2005). Historically, the school had always provided “remedial”, or extra classes, offering small group setting for weaker students in core subjects. The college has an excellent history of pastoral care for all of its students.

A SEN coordinator qualified in the area was appointed in 2005. The coordinator established the SEN/Resource department within the school. A Learning Support Development Plan was completed in 2007, which outlined best practice and set out a strategy for the delivery of an inclusive approach to SEN within the whole school context. Subsequently, considerable time, resources and effort were put into meeting the recommendations of this plan. The school building was made fully accessible with the addition of a lift and other features enabling greater access for all as a result of a building renovation. A dedicated resource room and office was built. Great progress was made in terms of providing students with SEN with dedicated resource teaching, in a withdrawal setting. The SEN coordinator has liaised effectively with the Guidance Counsellors in the school. The coordinator has also liaised effectively with senior management in moving the whole area of special educational needs forward within the school. A strong working relationship has been established with NEPs and the school designated SENCO. Parents of students with SEN have been very involved in the educational planning for their children. Some CPD on SEN was provided to the whole staff. Indeed, this developmental work was commended in a Whole School Evaluation in 2008.

“Learning support has developed in St Michael's College as a result of focused planning to meet student needs and the successful establishment of the learning support department is a major success of school development planning and is highly commended. The department consists of a small committed team of dedicated teaching staff members who have taken courses to update their knowledge and skills in this area. The way in which school management has supported training and staff development in this important area is commended.

A learning support development plan has been drawn up. This well produced and well researched document will form a sound basis for the development of a policy and it is recommended that a policy for students with additional needs be prioritised for completion, for ratification by the board and for adoption by the whole school community.

There is a good system of communication established between the learning support team and the year heads and tutors. A partnership approach is promoted between mainstream teachers, learning support teachers and parents in planning and implementing teaching programmes. Communication with parents is very good, with the learning support co-ordinator and principal meeting with parents to discuss their sons' learning needs.

Resource teachers visit the main feeder primary school to gather information regarding incoming students. Parents provide a psychological report when the student enters first year in the college. An individual education plan is drawn up for each student receiving learning support after consultation with relevant personnel.

... An inclusive approach is promoted. Students who are exempt from Irish attend small group classes or receive individual tuition. A designated additional needs room has been established with five computers and appropriate educational software and teaching resources. Good links have been built up with outside referral agencies. In practice, all students, including those with special needs, are encouraged to participate in all college activities so that they are integrated into school life and develop a sense of ownership of the college.”

3.0 Delivery of SEN within St. Michael's College

3.1 Staff Provision

Currently there are three teachers with the Grad. Dip. SEN qualification on the staff of the college.

- **Susan Healy** is the SEN Coordinator, teaching Resource and Learning Support, mainstream English at JC and LC. In keeping with circular 0003/2018 Leadership & Management in Post-Primary Schools the SEN & Reasonable Accommodation in State Exams roles were combined by the BOM at Assistant Principal level to reflect development in the area. Susan has worked as Associate for the Special Education Support Service/NCSE delivering CPD in the area of Additional Needs.
- **Samantha Stephens** is Learning Support and Resource teacher, teaching mainstream German & Business.
- **Jane Delaney**, (on a career break since 2012)
- **Subject Specialists: Currently Conor Nugent, Peter O'Rourke work as part of the resource team in literacy and numeracy.** To ensure full provision for all LS and LITH students, subject teachers who express an interest in teaching these classes will be timetabled and given support of SEN trained staff. This is especially helpful in areas where specific subject expertise is needed and at LC level.

3.2 Aims and Objectives

In keeping with the Mission Statement of St. Michael's College and as set out in The Education Act 1998, The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004 and Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2004

St Michael's College SEN department aims to:

- Fulfil the central aim of the college – to provide an education based on the characteristics of the Spiritan Philosophy.
- To enable the student to realise his potential as a unique individual through access to an appropriate broad and balanced curriculum.
- To provide supplementary teaching in key areas of Literacy and Numeracy via Learning Support and Resource classes
- Develop self-esteem and positive attitude towards learning in students with additional needs. Promote self-advocacy and independent learning in students with additional needs.
- Give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children who have a disability or who have other special educational needs, as they relate to school.
- Ensure that students with special educational needs are educated in an inclusive environment, as far as possible, fulfilling legislative requirements.
- 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.
- Work effectively as part of the College Core Care Team, liaising with senior management, guidance counsellors and chaplaincy.
- Co-operate and work closely with the National Council for Special Educational needs (NCSE) NEPS 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 the contribution they can make in this area. Develop staff expertise in SEN and offer a framework for best practice, via in-service and resource provision.
- Ensure that special educational needs are not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community and that students with special educational needs are offered a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Facilitating students with SEN to set achievable goals and provide them with appropriate guidance, encouraging them to achieve to their full potential
- Encourage and foster partnership with parents in order to achieve appropriate support at school and at home.

3.3 Roles and Responsibilities

3.3. (i) The Role of the Board of Management

- To ensure that all students with learning support / special educational needs are identified and assessed.
- To ensure that the school has a special educational needs policy in place, to monitor the implementation of that policy and to ensure its evaluation.
- To ensure that a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum is provided in the school to ensure in as far as is practical that students with special educational needs leave school with the skills necessary to participate to the level of their capacity in an inclusive way in society.
- To facilitate the full implementation of relevant aspects of the Children First Act (2015) To ensure that all staff are in the SEN role are familiar with the Implementation of Child Protection Procedures for Post –Primary schools and our school's Child Safeguarding Statement and that any staff member have undertaken the TUSLA on line training and have submitted the certificate to management of school. To ensure that all staff are aware of the procedure for mandatory reporting and aware of the DLP process in the school under the legislation.
- To ensure that necessary resources are sought on behalf of students with special educational needs. To promote the development of positive partnership with parents and other relevant agencies / personnel and to ensure that parents are informed of their child's special educational needs and how these needs are being met.
- To ensure that parents are consulted with regard to and invited to participate in the making of all significant decisions concerning their child's education.
- To ensure that the Special Educational Needs Policy forms part of the School plan.
- To develop a whole school approach to literacy and numeracy under Section 14 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.
- To ensure that an awareness of special educational needs is inculcated in students in the school.

3.3 (ii) The Role of the Principal

- On behalf of the Board of Management, the Principal has overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of policy and provision for students with special educational needs. The Principal may delegate certain functions to appropriate teachers (as outlined in Section 18 of the EPSEN Act 2004)
- To appoint a special needs co-ordinator from amongst the staff.
- In consultation with the Special needs co-ordinator, to ensure that an Individual Educational Plan(IEP) is prepared for relevant students as appropriate
- To inform the Board of Management of issues, which are relevant to special educational needs
- In consultation with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and other relevant personnel to liaise with the Department of Education and Skills regarding needs and

provision. This also includes applications for reasonable accommodations and exemptions in relation to state exams as well as assessments.

- To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources, including the allocation of resource hours and funds.
- To establish a 'Core Care Team' within the school with a specific remit to ensure identification of and support for students with special educational needs.
- To promote a whole school approach to special educational need, make all staff aware of their responsibilities in this area and to facilitate appropriate staff development in this area.
- To promote the development of positive partnerships with parents of students with special educational needs.
- To ensure that procedures exist for consultation with feeder primary schools with regard to the enrolment of new students with special educational needs.

3.3 Role of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

The duties are:

- Overseeing the day to day operation of the school's SEN policy
 - ✓ Timetable of LS, Resource, Team-Teaching
 - ✓ Liaise with Dep. Principal /Principal re Staffing
 - ✓ Parent consultations & student planning
 - ✓ Coordinate the SEN policy and Schemes of Work in conjunction with all teachers working in the SEN area, including providing resources
 - ✓ Advising staff of best practice for in-class SEN support
- Managing the SEN team of teachers, liaising with and advising fellow teachers
- Individual Education Plan co-ordination.
- Advice regarding Irish Exemptions for students with Dyslexia as per circular M10/
- Administration and Testing for Reasonable Accommodations for State Examinations
- Co-ordinating provision for pupils with SEN
- Overseeing the records/ student files on all pupils with SEN
- Liaising with parents of pupils with SEN
- Supporting Team-Teaching initiatives.
- Contributing to the CPD training of staff
- Liaising with relevant external agencies; some examples including:
 - ✓ *Special Education Needs Support Service*
 - ✓ *National Council for Special Education (NCSE)*
 - ✓ *National Education Psychology Service (NEPS)*
 - ✓ *State Examinations Commission*
 - ✓ *Visiting Teacher Service*
 - ✓ *Psychologists, Speech & language Therapists, Occupational Therapists*

- ✓ *Dyslexia, Dyspraxia Associations, HADD etc.*
- ✓ *Autism/Asperger Support Ireland*

These duties are reviewed regularly and may change to ensure the priority needs of the department are met.

4.0 Roles within St. Michael's College – SEN provision

4.1 Resource Teacher

The role of the Resource teacher is to provide support for children with special educational needs as listed above. The Resource teacher has responsibility for assessing and recording student's needs and progress, setting specific targets, team-teaching and assisting teachers in adapting the curriculum. The Resource teacher also has a responsibility for meeting and advising parents and meeting with relevant professionals/agencies. (Circular 08/02 Appendix 3). The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator provides each year head with a timetable for each student allocated resource hours. The name of the allocated resource teacher is included on this timetable. Resource teachers and subject teachers should work in partnership thus ensuring that students are supported as effectively as possible.

In St Michael's College both withdrawal from class, in-class support and Team Teaching is used. This is done after consultation with parents, the subject teacher and relevant class teacher or year head. The resource teacher has a very good insight into a student's needs and when appropriate can provide advice to subject teachers as to teaching methodologies best suited to that student. The resource teacher will conduct assessments, AFL and ongoing liaison with subject teachers. The resource teacher provides direct teaching to a student with SEN either to reinforce the teaching that takes place in the classroom or to improve upon the core skills that may be necessary to successfully access the second level curriculum.

Some students benefit from Team Teaching where the student is taught the subject at the same time the main class is scheduled. Small group teaching is also a consideration depending on the needs of the students involved and timetabling issues. When appropriate the resource teacher is invited to contribute at meetings involving parents (Parent/Teacher meetings and IEP's) and /or outside agencies.

Through the work of the Special Educational Needs Support team the school endeavours to create a whole school ownership in the management of Special Educational Needs. The SEN team play a key role in the evaluation of practice and procedures relating to SEN.

4.2 Learning Support Teacher

The role of the Learning Support teacher is to support and remediate the literacy and numeracy needs of students. The Learning Support teacher has responsibility for diagnostic

assessments, programme planning, consultation with parents, teachers and pupils, communication with whole staff and for teaching, monitoring and evaluating students' progress. (Learning Support Guidelines 2000)

4.3 The Role of Parents/Guardians

The Parent as the primary educators of their children, through their unique knowledge of their own child, have much to contribute to their child's learning programme. Parents are encouraged to actively communicate with the school if they observe any learning or related difficulties in their child at home. In all cases where screening, assessment and profiling is being conducted, parents are consulted and their permission sought. The SEN department advocates a partnership of collaboration and co-operation with parents of students with SEN.

Involvement of Parents: The College regards the partnership with parents as a very important one and is always open and responsive to expressions of concern made by parents. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend any meeting concerning their son's progress. The Subject Teacher, Year Head and when appropriate the Special Educational Needs co-ordinator are available by appointment to meet with parents regarding concerns. Parents are encouraged to discuss any issues or concerns with the school at the earliest opportunity. The college recognises its responsibility under the EPSEN Act 2004 to

- ✓ Inform parents of their child's special educational needs and how those are being met.
- ✓ Consult parents with regard to the making of all decisions of a significant nature concerning their child's education and invite them to participate in such decisions.

The SEN team are in regular contact with the parents of students with special educational needs. This contact can take the form of a meeting, email or phone call. Students receive regular online reports via VSWare. Students use GoogleClassroom.com where helpful. There is one parent-teacher meeting each year where parents have the opportunity to meet with all teachers. The Special Needs team are available to parents throughout the year via email, telephone or personal meeting. Parents are not expected to hold SEN consultations at parent-teacher evenings to preserve personal privacy of the student.

4.4 The role of the Student

The involvement of pupils in the development, implementation and review of their own learning programmes is an important principle that underpins effective SEN provision. Students are encouraged to contribute to the learning targets as set out in the Individual Education Plan (IEP), and to develop ownership of the skills and strategies that are taught in

the Learning Centre. The College believes that achievements are maximised when students take ownership of their learning. Students work best when actively involved in their own learning. The department encourages peer-mentoring and group/pair work to support student skills. SEN staff fully involve students in skills audits and discussions about their learning needs via meetings and formulation of SEN IEP's. Students in Senior Cycle are particularly encouraged to adopt a proactive and independent approach to their studies and accommodations.

4.5 Role of Subject Specialists teaching SEN

The role of the subject teacher, who has Resource hours in the SEN department, is to support and contribute to the individual learning needs of SEN students. Where possible, teachers with Learning Support on their timetables are asked to attend an initial meeting with the SEN department. At this meeting the needs of the student and her learning targets are outlined. The "specialist" is asked to contribute to those targets and formulate programmes of their own which provide circular support to the SEN student. The SEN department works in close collaboration and consultation with those specialist teachers who contribute so effectively and creatively to the SEN department.

4.6 Role of Subject Teacher

The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class. It is particularly important that all class teachers create a classroom environment that accommodates and takes cognisance of learning difficulties. The teacher also plays an important role in the early identification of pupils 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 department. A key element of successful SEN provision is a high level of consultation and co-operation between the subject teacher and the SEN teaching team. The class teacher is welcome to contribute to the learning targets set out in the SEN students IEP. Subject teachers are aware of their duty under the EPSEN act to provide differentiated learning and in-class support to students with additional needs.

At St Michael's College the academic progress of students throughout the school rests in the first instance with the subject teacher. The college recognises that it is the professional duty of each subject teacher to support the students using strategies which will have been made available to them. In order to ensure that as a school we meet the needs of all our students subject teachers are encouraged to:

- Be aware of the school's SEN Policy & Programme for dealing with students with special educational needs.

- Seek advice from the SEN department regarding students with special educational needs.
- Participate in continuous professional development, particularly with regard to common difficulties eg. Dyslexia, Specific Language difficulties and Dyspraxia.
- Support the provision of differentiated learning in the classroom for students with Special Educational Needs.
- Support / encourage independence in the student. Promote self-advocacy and independent learning in all students.
- Help identify students that may need learning support, liaising with SEN and core care team

4.7 Guidance Counsellors

The Guidance Counsellors role within the SEN team consists largely of the following functions:

- Co-ordinating 1st year CAT assessments
- Counselling in personal, educational and career development
- Coordinate Care Team
- Personal and Social development
- Psychological testing
- Career information management
- Consultation with parents and staff
- Consultation with community organisations
- Vocational preparation – job search skills, preparation for work experience
- Referrals to other professional agencies
- Evaluation of the guidance and counselling needs and services

4.8 Role of Special Needs Assistants

Currently 4 students in the college have access to an SNA.

As laid out in circulars 07/02, 24/03 (Appendix 4, 5), the role of the Special Needs Assistant is as follows:

Role of the SNA in support of the student

- ✓ Responsibility for the care and well-being of the student in a manner that values, respects and supports the student as well as promoting independence. This is achieved by
- ✓ Accompanying Assist Model
- ✓ Listen Clarify Read material
- ✓ Encourage Anticipating Make note of HW
- ✓ Observe Preparing Focus student

- ✓ Supporting each pupil in the manner, which responds to her needs.

Role of SNA in collaboration with the teacher

- ✓ Assist - Prepare materials
- ✓ Communicate - Feedback observations
- ✓ Free up in the class - Maintaining work areas
- ✓ Support - Organising folders
- ✓ In addition to the duties laid out above we also stress the following points:
- ✓ The SNA may not be asked to act as substitute for an absent teacher or be left in sole charge of a class.
- ✓ The SNA is privy to confidential information pertaining to SEN pupils. As such confidentiality is of paramount importance.
- ✓ The duties of the SNA include assisting on out of school extra-curricular activities
- ✓ The role of the SNA is pivotal and important in the school. We recognise the enormous contribution our SNA's make to the school.
- ✓ Please refer to Circular 08/02 in Appendix 3

5.0 Procedures for students transferring from other schools

The transition of students with SEN to post-primary is must be managed to ensure the successful move into secondary education. To facilitate the transfer from Primary School prior to entry to St. Michael's College the First Year Head and the SEN co-ordinator make contact with the parents of incoming SEN students. This is an important step in ensuring proper identification of students with SEN and the continuity of provision for them.

Information received from Primary Schools and parents coupled with the results from any primary diagnostic testing and/or Cognitive Ability Tests help the school to identify those students who may need additional support at Secondary School level. Students may present with full Educational Psychological Assessments/Medical Reports/Irish Exemptions or Assistive Technology already granted by DE.

In keeping with the new model of support, when a student is accepted into the College to join a year group other than First Year information is sought from their previous school. The Principal/ Deputy Principal usually do this. This information is passed to the Year Head and SEN co-ordinator if appropriate.

6.0 Identification of Students with Special Educational Needs

The college adheres to the New Model of Support Guidelines for post-primary schools on the utilisation and management of their resources were published earlier this year, in conjunction with DES Circular 0014 2017. *(Link: [New Model SEN support NCSE Dept of Education](#))

6 Principles to Guide the Implementation Process

These principles are further explored in the Guidelines for Schools

Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (DES:2017)

1. Resources provided to support pupils with special educational needs should be used to facilitate the development of truly inclusive schools.
2. Supports provided to pupils with special educational needs should be based on identified needs and be informed by regular reviews of progress (in consultation with parents and pupils) as outlined in the Continuum of Support Guidelines.
3. The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all pupils in the classroom, including pupils with special educational needs.
4. Special education teaching supports provided to schools should be 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 cannot be used to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio in mainstream classes. Neither can they be used to allow any special education teacher sole responsibility for the delivery of any curriculum subject to any particular class.
5. Pupils with the greatest levels of need should have access to the greatest level of support, and whenever possible, these pupils should be supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.
6. Schools with more than one support teacher should establish and maintain a core team of teachers to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. All members should have the necessary experience and access to continuing professional development to support the diverse needs of pupils with special educational needs.

The Department has set out the Continuum of Support framework to assist schools in identifying and responding to students' 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 students 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 schools to gather and analyse data, as well as to plan and review the progress of individual students.

This problem-solving process is illustrated as follows: Identification of educational need is central to the new model. Using the Continuum of Support framework, schools can identify students' 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 student's needs in context, and provides useful resources to support this (for example, Learning Environment Checklist, Teacher Checklist for Whole-Class Structures and Supports).

Implementing a Continuum of Support for Students with Special

Educational Needs: A Three-Step Process

1. Identification of need

- ✓ ♦ Use the Continuum of Support problem-solving process to identify and respond to academic, social and emotional needs
- ✓ ♦ Gather and analyse data , interview, curriculum based assessment, screening and diagnostic assessment, as well as from professional reports, as appropriate
- ✓ ♦ Consult with parents and students, and with relevant external professionals, as appropriate
- ✓ ♦ Use the Student Support File to record identification and assessment of needs, intervention supports and review of progress

2. Meeting need

- ✓ ♦ Plan, implement and review early-intervention approaches to promote academic, social and emotional skills
- ✓ ♦ Subject teacher, special education teacher, parents and students collaborate to set specific time-bound targets

- ✓ ♦ Carefully match interventions to identified need
- ✓ ♦ Continue to promote effective teaching approaches, including differentiation of content and activities to ensure that all students are engaged purposefully in meaningful learning activities

3. **Monitoring and reviewing outcomes**

- ✓ ♦ Using baseline information, review and record progress and plan for next steps in students' learning
- ✓ ♦ Maintain support plans that are clear, useful and easy to interpret and share
- ✓ Review outcomes at individual, group, class and whole-school level.

Based on this model students in St Michael's College are identified as having a special educational needs in the following ways:

- Screening using the CAT4 and WIAT IIT / or WRAT 4 Maths assessments run in First Year
- Parents advise SEN Co/Principal or Year Head on admission to the college.
- Parents provide the college with Educational Assessments or relevant medical information and a student file is established.
- The parent/subject teacher/year head/student voices concerns about the student's progress and diagnostic testing is conducted with parental permission. Likewise a parent may request NEPS assessment or seek advice from a professional in the field like an Occupational Therapist, Educational Psychologist or medical professional. Once an assessment and diagnosis are received, the SEN team can provide appropriate resources for the student.

6.1 Care Team Participation

Susan Healy (SEN Co) attends the fortnightly care team meeting with the school chaplain, guidance counsellors and senior management team. Students with care needs are discussed in a multi-disciplinary environment and a care plan determined with parental support. Pastoral/Year Heads occasionally attend to focus on specific needs/strategies within a specific year group. Rory O'Connor leads the school core care team. Ben Healy and Rory O'Connor are the two Guidance Counsellors in the college. Please refer to the Guidance Plan for more details.

7.0 Practical Implementation of SEN policy within St. Michael's College.

7.1 Timetabling

The Special Education timetables are drawn up annually by the SENco and Deputy Principal. They are reviewed and altered on a termly basis as needs change. All students with a DES Irish Exemption are facilitated with a Learning Support Class timetable, scheduled against Irish. SEN timetable encompasses Resource, Learning Support and Team Teaching allocation

7.2 Applications for SEN teaching hours

The SEN coordinator liaises with the SENO and fulfils the school's obligation to apply for Resource and general allocation hours on behalf of all students identified as having a SEN within the college based on the New Guidelines.

7.3 Recording of student/class schemes of work

All students with SEN have a student folder and keep a SEN booklet that records work completed in each class. This is recorded by student and teacher. Students also have access to google classroom to offer interactive support for their work. Students also use www.ixl.com to do online Maths and Literacy courses and progress is recorded online as part of the school account.

7.4 Student Files

All students who have a diagnosed educational /medical need have a file in the school. These files are held in the SEN office. They contain notes of phone calls, assessments and other written documentation relevant to the student. Currently most communication is by email and these are held electronically on the schools secure system and serve as a record of communication. Student IEP's are held electronically as (they were once printed) they are a living document and constantly updated. They are available on VSWare to staff and parents

Access to Assessment Records: The College is aware that some assessment material is of a sensitive nature and therefore it is treated confidentially and only made available to appropriate personnel. The dept. can manage a significant amount of the assessment information for students with SEN. Relevant information is disseminated as appropriate by the SEN team

7.5 School Communication;

The SEN Dept hold a weekly meeting (minutes are kept electronically) The coordinator holds regular meeting with the Principal and Deputy Principal. The school email system is used as a confidential and secure means of disseminating information to all staff. Students can now communicate with staff via secure email. The SEN department are beginning to use Google Classroom as a secure and measurable way of promoting AFL and improving communication between staff /students/parents/

7.6 Resources

The Department take their resources from a wide range of textbooks, websites, subject material and support material specifically designed for SEN. Staff are given a list of resources annually and can take material from the SEN office. Currently the department are implementing Google Classroom and Quizlet to further support our students. (Appendix)

8.0 Irish Exemptions – School Policy

The Board of Management of the College adhere to the Department of Education & Science Circular (M10-94), seeking advice from NEPS where necessary. The policy is as follows:

In the case of children with a specific learning difficulty (SLD), exemptions from the study of Irish are granted to children with (a) an average IQ score (b) a word reading score at/below the 10th percentile and a second attainment score in literacy / language at /below the 10th percentile.

In the case of children with a general learning difficulty (B/M/GLD), exemptions from the study of Irish are granted to children with (a) an IQ score indicating a general learning disability (79*and below) (b) a word reading score at /below the 10th percentile and a second attainment score in the Literacy/Language at/ below the 10th percentile.

Borderline Mild General Learning Disability (IQ: 70-79) is considered a general learning disability.

This criteria will be used by all NEPS psychologists if recommending an exemption from Irish in the interim period from now until such time as new guidelines may be issued.

Students who withdraw from the study of a Modern Foreign Language It is the college policy that all students follow a modern language up to at least ordinary level standard junior certificate. In some circumstances, following consultation with language teachers and parents, it may be beneficial for a student with Special Educational needs to be withdrawn from the modern language examinations in exceptional circumstances.

As with Irish Exemptions the college believes that it is important that students regardless of their exemption be exposed to the language even if it be in a limited capacity. It is therefore unlikely that a student would be withdrawn from all their language lessons. When in the language lesson they are encouraged to participate in if and when appropriate.

9.0 Reasonable Accommodations For State Examinations

Arrangement at Junior Certificate Applications for reasonable accommodations are collated and signed off by the college at Junior Cert level. Applications are based on percentiles as outlined in the guidance issued by the State Examination Commission. Susan Healy processes all these accommodations in accordance with the SEC guidance

Arrangements at Leaving Certificate. The College assists students and parents in applying for Reasonable Accommodations towards the end of 5th year for the Leaving Cert. Students

must ensure that they have an up to date medical or educational psychological or occupational therapist report (whichever is relevant). Students are also tested by the learning support teacher with regards to hand writing speed, reading speed and spelling errors, to assess their specific learning difficulties. Susan will liaise with NEPS , the SEC & the visiting teachers for visually and hearing impaired to get guidance where necessary in making appropriate applications.

Staff administer testing in the school .(WRAT 4 and WIAT IIT) and also run all the tests in line with the criteria set out by the SEC for RACE for each academic year.

A list of students who may qualify for DARE is sent to the senior classes guidance counsellor every year and parents/students referred to them for information re DARE

10.0 Monitoring, Evaluation, Assessment

All students are assessed on an ongoing basis. Assessment may be formal, informal, or formative.

Formal Assessment

Incoming First Years sit Cognitive Ability Tests (CAT4). WIAT IIT is spelling is used as screening in 1st Year. WRAT4 Maths testing is also available. This information is compared with data provided by the students Primary school. Students sit house examinations before Christmas break and before summer break. State examination students would sit Mock exams on that year. Students sit Differential Aptitude Tests (DAT) in Transition Year.

Informal Assessment

In class questioning, assessing homework / project work /The literacy and numeracy skills of students with SEN may be assessed.

The responsibility for many aspects of formal and informal assessments lies in the first instance with the subject teacher. The organisation of the DAT and CAT tests is the responsibility of the Guidance Department who are supported by the SEN Department. Resource / Learning support teachers take responsibility for literacy and numeracy testing of LS students in their classes.

10.1. Assessment for Learning in the SEN Department

Assessment as defined by the NCCA , as the process of generating, gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting evidence of learning in individuals, groups or systems, which relies upon a number of instruments, one of which may be a test. Educational assessment provides information about progress in learning.

Assessment for learning is about using assessment in the classroom as a tool to improve students' learning, and is characterised by

- sharing learning goals with students
- helping students to recognise the standards they are aiming for
- involving students in assessing their own learning

- providing feedback, which helps students to recognise what they must do to close any gaps in their knowledge or understanding
- communicating confidence that every student can improve
- adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment

A variety of classroom assessment strategies as outlined below are considered when planning a lesson or a unit of study within the SEN department. It is important to remember that the primary intention of the teacher is not simply to gain information about the students' achievements (what they know) but to use assessment to further the learning process. One of the most frequently employed methods of monitoring student progress and achievement is the use of judicious questioning by the teacher.

Sharing learning goals with students

In the SEN department, teachers are usually quite clear about the objectives for a unit of study. Students may understand what to do for individual tasks but be less clear about how these tasks fit into 'the big picture'. They can be greatly helped when the teacher explains the learning goals--what she/he hopes the students will learn and why they are learning it--in words that they can understand. We the teachers involve the students in the learning intention through the initial brainstorming session and group work. Learning objectives for the lesson are set by students/teacher and recorded in the Lesson Booklet. This activity provides a context in which the teacher can convey the learning goal to the students.

Assessment For Learning. (Helping students to realise their true potential)

Ideally this is done through exemplification of student work. Students should have access to work done by their peers to help them to see what can be achieved. Over the period of the Assessment for Learning Initiative a range of exemplars of student work will be posted on the SEN Google Classroom.

However, effective marking of student work can contribute significantly to the students' appreciation of the standards towards which they are aiming. Through feedback that is focused on the learning task, teachers can indicate to their students just what is involved in a high-quality piece of work and can point out the steps that students need to take in order to improve--to close the gap between where they are at present and where they need to go. Teacher comments should focus on what has been done well and what needs to be improved rather than on listing the errors that have been made, which can typify some traditional approaches to marking. The school policy of "Two Stars and a Wish" is being used in all assessment of work.

Student Self-Assessment is encouraged with academic and social skills work. We aim to use the NEPS continuum of support evaluation sheets to help students understand their behaviours and improve their own work.

School Self Evaluation

As a Department, we are committed to continuously improving on our practices for the benefit of our students. We aim to reflect regularly on our methodologies and results. We aim to collaborate with our fellow colleagues so that we may share good practice. Our aim through self-evaluation is to improve the learning of our students.

Involving students in assessing their own learning

Students need to develop the capacity for self-assessment so that they can become independent learners with the ability to seek out and gain new skills, knowledge and understandings. Teachers can encourage this by providing opportunities for students to assess their own and one another's work, and to review and record their own progress. This helps the students to understand their achievements, identify the gaps in their knowledge and plan for better learning. Providing feedback which helps students to recognise what they must do to close any gaps in their knowledge or understanding

This involves telling students what they have achieved with specific reference to the learning task. It is one of the most important elements of assessment for learning. Assessment without feedback disconnects it from the teaching and learning process; it becomes a classroom routine or a strategy to maintain discipline. Equally, feedback in the form of marks and/or grades can act as a disincentive to students. Research has shown that students respond to constructive comments much more so than to marks or grades. Teachers can help students to improve upon their work by pinpointing their strengths and being clear and constructive about their weaknesses and how they might be addressed.

Communicating confidence that every student can improve

Feedback that focuses on the learning task and that highlights what needs to be done can help to ensure that all students believe they can improve. Not all students learn in the same way, however, and including an element of differentiation by task or outcome in a lesson can allow for students with differing learning styles and strengths to experience success.

Teachers should build in a degree of differentiation into the tasks set so that students could choose the format for their presentations from a range of options.

Adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment

Teaching and learning do not progress in linear, evenly paced increments. Indeed, a necessary part of the teacher's interaction with the learner/s is his/her judgements about the success of the learning so far and the adjustment in teaching that must be made in the light of those judgements

Differentiation

Differentiation is a process which teachers use to support students with SEN in mainstream educational settings that involves varying the content, methodologies and resources, adapting the pace or level of instruction of the curriculum in response to individual students'

needs, styles or interests (Heacox, 2002, EASDI, 2010). A lack of effective curriculum differentiation can be a major barrier to inclusion for students with SEN. Differentiated teaching and learning typically involves modifications to the content, process and product used (Thomas *et al*, 1998, Mitchel, 2008). The SEN team differentiate not just because of different abilities but also due to students learning in different ways. In order to differentiate the curriculum appropriately, all teachers should be aware of the individual needs of students in their class. Coffey (2004) suggests that in order for differentiation to facilitate students with SEN to obtain meaningful participation, it should enable students to experience a broader, more diverse curriculum in common with their peers. The SEN team are increasingly concerned to ensure that the curriculum offered during differentiation during SEN provision is not merely a 'watered down' version or a poor relation of the existing curriculum but a collaborative approach is used at all times with mainstream teachers to ensure that students receive a complimentary learning environment from the SEN team.

Inclusion of students with special educational needs using ICT

Proponents claim that ICT can help all students access the curriculum and work more independently in the classroom (Cotton and Wikeland, 2001, Bennett, *et al*, 2008, Rivers, 2000). The effective use of ICT can assist educators in ensuring that students with SEN experience success as learners. This is certainly the case for many students who consistently perform better during lessons whereby ICT is utilised. ICT offers the possibility to visually differentiate the curriculum and supports students with SEN in completing tasks at varying levels of difficulty (NCSE, 2010). By students interacting with ICT, they can increase their attention span and motivation skills. Through its use as a collaborative learning tool, ICT also provides opportunities for developing social and peer interaction skills when used during group activities. In addition, many behavioural difficulties tend to diminish when students are given time working independently on the computers (Neall, 2008).

The SEN team are aware of health and safety risks that ICT could potentially have for any of the students in the class. Photo-sensitive epilepsy could be triggered by flashing images on an interactive whiteboard from an ICT resource used. Students with SEN can have sensory processing impairments, the noise and stimuli produced by digital resources may not be suitable for them. We as a team endeavour to find the most suitable digital resource available to suit the needs of the students in our class. We must ensure that the use of ICT is appropriately integrated into the curriculum and is regarded in light of the aims of the school and classroom programmes. It is imperative we select suitable educational software during the planning stage in order to meet the aims and learning objectives of a particular lesson. The Department have moved to iPads and are moving toward use of Apple TV to replace the obsolete technology.

Google Classroom & Quizlet, Schooltube, ICT, Popplet

As part of our stated targets for 2105/6 the SEN department are starting to use ICT to help with student learning and teacher planning. We are using Google Classroom to provide students with meaningful communication with teachers, also to better support parents in monitoring and participating in their child's learning. We are using Quizlet, online mind mapping tools like Popplet and Prezi to encourage students to develop key words skills and develop planning and literacy. We are using KhanAcademy and IXL for maths and are developing our use of the interactive whiteboard in the resource room.

11.0 Individual Education Plans (Learning Plans)

The SEN department endeavours to establish an ongoing "Learning Plan" for all students with complex or more significant needs. The IEP process is undergoing ongoing review. Since 2014, we are moving to a shorter, electronic "living" document which is available on our secure VSWare system. A template is outlined in this section but is subject to amendment as the pilot is implemented, evaluated and reviewed.

The college believe that the formulation of Individual Education Plans(IEPs) is the most effective when it is carried out in a collaborative manner with all stakeholders involved. To facilitate this process within the constraints of a school environment the following structures have been set up.

Collating Relevant Information Prior to an IEP Planning Meeting the Co-ordinator supported by appropriate personnel will ensure that all information is entered on IEP form. (Appendix 2) . This form is the basis of discussions at the IEP Planning meeting.

IEP Planning Meeting: The IEP Planning meeting is an opportunity for the school to liaise with all personnel working with the student. The following people should be invited to the planning meeting. Not all of these parties are always present or necessary at meetings, but are made aware of any recommendations/actions agreed.

- ✓ Parent / Guardian
- ✓ Any outside agency working with the student
- ✓ Learning Support / Resource teacher
- ✓ It may also be beneficial (but not always necessary) for the following people to attend: Resource Teacher .Student (for some part of the meeting)

At this meeting the Priority Learning Needs for the student are decided.

Formulating the IEP – a collaborative approach: To ensure that all teachers are aware of the Priority Learning Needs of the student, the IEP Form (appendix 2) is disseminated to all staff teaching the student.

Where exemption from a particular subject is being considered as part of the IEP, the resource teacher will consult with the affected teacher prior to the preparation of the IEP. Teachers are asked to set the student a target related to the Priority Learning Needs and outline what strategies they will adopt to support the student in achieving this target. IEP

Summary sheets are returned to Co-ordinator who will collate the information. A review date to monitor student progress against agreed targets will be set . The completed IEP will be disseminated to the appropriate people. In context of this policy Special Educational Needs teachers shall include learning support and Resource Teachers.

Conclusion

The SEN Department Policy is accompanied by a Dept Plan that is updated on an annual basis by the SEN coordinator.

Appendices noted in the index are attached to the Department Plan.