

## Special Educational Needs (SEN) Policy 2023

### 1. Context

St. Cuana's N.S. caters for children from Junior Infants to 6th Class and is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. The school currently has a Principal, 8 mainstream class teachers, 2 special class teachers (Appendix D) and 3.5 Special Education Teachers.

The school has 8 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). The allocation of both Special Education Support 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.

The policy is based on Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (Department of Education & Skills, 2017) and Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools (Dept of Ed & Skills 2022).

### 2. 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.

### 3. Principles of SEN Support

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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**

<b>Table 1: Identification of Educational Needs through the Continuum of Support Process</b>	
<b>Classroom Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 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.</li><li>● 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.</li><li>● The plan will be reviewed after each instructional term (using the Review Page from the Continuum of Support document).</li><li>● If the plan is working well for the child it may be decided to continue with it.</li><li>● If insufficient progress is made and the child is still having difficulty then Stage 2 (School Support) is implemented.</li></ul>

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<b>School Support</b>	<p>If further intervention is deemed necessary and the child is to receive supplementary teaching at school level then an email or a request on Aladdin will be sent to parents. The class teacher and Support teacher draw up a plan of appropriate learning outcomes based on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teacher observation records</li><li>• Teacher-designed measures/assessments</li><li>• Parent and pupil interviews</li><li>• Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy</li><li>• A support plan at this level may detail suitable teaching approaches including team-teaching, small groups or individual tuition.</li><li>• A school support plan operates for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.</li></ul> <p>This plan will form the 2nd instructional page of the child's Continuum of support. It 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)</p>
<b>School Support Plus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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 programmes, 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.</li><li>• Following the consultation, the class teacher, SET, parents and outside professionals (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.</li><li>• 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.</li><li>• 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 Support teacher.</li></ul> <p>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 Support teacher</p>

## 4. 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, SETs, SNAs, Children and external bodies and agencies.

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## **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 support for teachers.

## **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 Support Teacher 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 cooperation between the Class Teacher and the SET. Central to this consultation is the development, implementation and review of support plans. This consultation will be achieved through formal timetabling of 2 hours per SET per instructional term. This may include special class teachers and mainstream teachers where applicable and through informal consultation as the need arises.

## **Special Education Teachers (SET)**

The central roles of the SET will be to

a) support the class teacher in optimising teaching and learning opportunities and

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b) provide specialised teaching to those children with identified special educational needs.

SET responsibilities will also 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 recording 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.

- ❖ 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.

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- ❖ 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:

- ♣ Administration of medicine.
- ♣ Assistance with toileting and general hygiene.
- ♣ 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 which require 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.

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♣ 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.

## **5. Prevention and Early Intervention 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.
- ♣ Careful development of phonological awareness, rhyming skills and oral language skills, before formal reading of words and books. See Appendix A
- ♣ 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.

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♣ Support for children experiencing social/emotional difficulties and problems with concentration. - Brain Calm, movement breaks

♣ 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 SET, in accordance with the Staged Approach (NEPS Continuum). Collaboration and consultation between the Class Teachers and the SETs, 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 –

♣ Active learning programme for all Junior Infant children with specific emphasis on oral language development, underpinned by the principles of the new Language Curriculum.

♣ Early intervention literacy and language support programme (Guided Reading using PM Readers) in Senior Infant to 2nd classes daily for a period of 6 weeks.

♣ 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.

When identifying and selecting children for additional teaching support, children with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest level of support.

## **6. 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).

- Children scoring at or below the 10 th percentile on standardised assessments in Literacy and Maths.
- Children scoring at or below the 12 th percentile on standardised assessments in Literacy and Maths (to allow for a margin of error).
- Children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) and whose English needs further support.
- 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.
- 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.
- Children experiencing serious difficulties with oral language or social or emotional development or application to learning, despite interventions made by the Class Teacher at



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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.

- 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. Families are informed that the Centre for Talented Youth Ireland (CTYI) is accessed as appropriate.

## **7. 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.

## **8. Monitoring Progress**

- The Support Review Record on the Continuum of Support will be completed by the SET 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) or as a hardcopy by SET.
- 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.

## **9. 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 classroom and passed on from teacher to teacher as the child moves through the school. This file contains a sample of the child's work throughout the year, parent-teacher meeting notes, if not saved on Aladdin, Standardised Tests results for 1st and 2nd ( front page) results ,Standardised Tests, Spellings for me results and any relevant correspondence relating to the child.
- Diagnostic Assessments and other checklists administered by the SET will be put in the child's file in the classroom.

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- Continuum of Support documents for Children with SEN are also kept in the child's file in the classroom (a copy of relevant pages for the SET).
- Personal Pupil Plans for children with SNA access will also be kept in the child's file in the classroom.
- 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 SET coordinator's files. The Standardised Tests currently used in our school are – Drumcondra Reading and Maths . The MIST (Senior Infant Test) is also administered.
- The End of Year school Report will be issued to parents/guardians in June. These reports are saved in Aladdin.
- Monthly Reports from the SET will be sent to the Principal. These reports outline the work undertaken by the support Teacher with groups or individual children.

## **10. Liaising with Parents/Communicating Information**

- Class teacher meets with parents/guardians initially to discuss concerns and outline supports available in the school.
- SET and Class Teacher meet with parents to agree a School Support Plan for the child.
- SET 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.
- Parent Teacher Meetings for all classes are held in October.
- An information meeting is held for the parents of incoming Junior Infants in February.
- An end-of-year report goes home in June each year. Opportunities to discuss this report are made available before the end of term.

## **11. 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 Support Teacher, they can be withdrawn to a quiet space.
- In so far as is practicable children should not miss out on the same curricular area each time they receive supplementary teaching.
- Individual support teachers will review their timetable at the end of each instructional term/block.

## **12. Attendance**

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

## **13. 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 every 3 years.

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## 14. 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-all-ocatingspecial-education-teachers-to-mainstream-schools.pdf>
- Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools 2022

Useful websites:

- ♣ Department of Education & Skills: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)
- ♣ National Council for Special Education: [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)
- ♣ National Council for Curriculum Assessment: [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)
- ♣ Health Service Executive: [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

## List of additional documents used in SEN planning:

- Permission to allow access to reports
- Basic Needs Checklist
- Learning Environment Checklist
- Identification of Educational Needs through the Continuum of Support (Overview Page)
- Student Support File for St.Cuana's NS (Continuum of Support document)
- Permission for child to attend Support Teaching/Parents' Consent Form - Aladdin request
- Permission for teacher to administer screening/diagnostic tests
- SEN Record

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· Personal Support Plan

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## Appendix A

 phonologocialawarenesspackage.pdf

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## Appendix B

<b>SUPPORT REVIEW RECORD*</b>	<i>Classroom Support</i>
	<i>School Support (Support for SOME)</i>
	<i>School Support Plus (Support for A FEW)</i>

**To be completed by the teacher(s) as a review of the plan and as a guide for future actions.**

For help, see 'SEN: A Continuum of Support - Guidelines for Teachers', 'BESD: A Continuum of Support - Guidelines for Teachers', 'A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools', 'Resource pack for Teachers', 'Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools'.

Student's name	Class/ Year	
Names of those present at review	Date of Review	
What areas of the plan have been most successful and why?		
Since the start of the plan, has anything changed in relation to the original concerns? If so, what are these changes, and what have we learned from them?		
Have the student's needs changed since the start of the plan, and if so how?		
Recommended future actions - <i>what, how, who, when?</i>		
Any comments from the student?		
Any comments from the parent(s)/guardian(s) comment?		
Signature of parent(s)/ guardian(s)		
Signature of teacher(s)		

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<b>Outcome of review (tick as appropriate)</b>			
	Revert to previous level of support- Support for All/ Classroom Support OR Support for Some/ School Support		Progress to next level of support- Support for Some/ School Support OR Support for a Few/ School Support Plus
	Continue at Current Level of Support		Request consultation with other professionals

\*A consultation with a NEPS psychologist/ other professionals may contribute to this review.

**Appendix C**  
**SSP Planning/Review Sheet**

**Name of Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Class:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Progress to Date/ Strengths:**

(The nature and degree of the child's abilities, skills and talents)

**Areas for Improvement/Presenting Difficulties:**

(The nature and degree of the child's special educational needs and how those needs affect his/her progress)

(The present level of educational performance of the child)

**Summary of Special Educational Needs:**

(The special educational needs of the child)

**Special Educational Provision:**

(The special education and related support services to be provided to the child)

**Further Information:**

**Appendix D**

**Special ASD Class Policy**

*Meeting the Needs of Pupils with Autism*

**1. Background & History of ASD Classes**



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Autism is a pervasive, developmental disorder; difficulties experienced by those diagnosed with autism can vary in severity. Current estimates state that approximately 1 in every 65 children now receive a formal diagnosis of autism. This has meant that the numbers of pupils attending the school who are diagnosed with autism has risen and may well continue to rise in the foreseeable future. This policy has been written to supplement other current policies in the school and should be considered alongside the existing policies and documents already in place particularly the school's SEN Policy.

In St. Cuana's N.S. There are two classes for children with Autism. An enrollment of 6 per class is the maximum number of students that each class can cater for.

## 2. Aims

*St. Cuana's N.S.* aims to meet the needs of its pupils with autism by:

- Offering a variety of consistent, high quality provision
- Ensuring that staff have access to CPD and support
- Collaborating with a range of professionals and communicating with parents/carers
- Planning to address the individual and specific needs of pupils with autism including behavioural needs
- Delivering curriculum which balances social and academic need, mental health and emotional wellbeing.

## 3. Placement / Provision

Pupils within the infant class age range will enter the junior ASD class. Pupils may transfer to an alternative class following their initial reception year depending on movement within the ASD classes and availability of places. Pupils starting their placement in St. Cuana's N.S. after the infant age range onward will be placed within an appropriate class; this decision is based on the needs, age, ability of the pupil in relation to staffing levels, staff expertise and the needs of the other pupils in the class and if there is a place in the class.

## 4. Staffing

Each class is led by a classroom teacher. Additionally each class also benefits from support of two special needs assistants (SNA's). At *St. Cuana's N.S.* We believe that pupils' independence should be promoted wherever possible and, although there will be some opportunities for pupils to work 1:1 with staff throughout the day, we do not have a policy of providing continual 1:1 support for pupils. Wherever possible, St. Cuana's N.S. will cover staff absence from regular, experienced substitutes in order to promote consistency and continuity which is particularly beneficial for pupils with autism.

## 5. Learning Environments

An organised and well planned learning environment is essential for the holistic development of pupils with autism. All learning environments within *St. Cuana's N.S.* will therefore provide:

- A high level of visual support eg. timetables/first then
- Clear teaching areas and opportunities for interaction
- The necessary amount of structure to address the needs of pupils with autism in each class eg. TEACCH
- Opportunities to develop intended and spontaneous communication
- Low arousal environments where necessary

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- Access to other environments where possible eg. Gross Motor Room/Multi Sensory Room/Kitchen/mainstream classrooms for inclusion etc.

## 6. Curriculum

The overall curriculum delivered at *St. Cuana's N.S.* is based on the National Curriculum which has been differentiated. **The National Curriculum is also used in the ASD classes in addition to other ASD specific curricula eg. TEACCH Pre-School Curriculum/NCSE CAT-GLD/Stepping Stones where appropriate.** The pedagogical principles that are common in mainstream contexts are also applied in special settings, while teaching approaches in a special class may require greater levels of differentiation and individualisation in line with students strengths and needs. The curriculum is designed to be broad and balanced taking into account the social, academic, social, emotional needs and general wellbeing of pupils with autism. The overall curriculum delivered at *St. Cuana's N.S.* includes opportunities to address the following:

- Communication and Language/Engagement/Joint Attention
- Interaction/Social Skills
- Flexibility of thought
- Sensory sensitivity and regulation
- Anxiety
- Independence
- Self Care
- Safety Awareness
- Real life experiences outside of the school environment

## 7. Planning

Teachers' short term planning follows the school's own schemes of work which are adapted from the National Curriculum. Planning consists of Long Term Plans, Fortnightly Plans, Monthly Reports. Teachers differentiate learning opportunities for pupils with autism in a variety of ways, all of which are detailed in their class plans. Teachers may also use an Impact of Autism plan to support the students in their care.

Additionally, every pupil with autism has a pupil needs analysis which highlights areas of learning needs and strengths and a student support file which covers the following areas:

- Communication
- Sensory Needs
- Social & Emotional Needs
- Independence

## 8. Behaviour

The impact of autism on pupils may cause high levels of frustration and/or anxiety resulting in challenging behaviour which presents a barrier to their learning. At *St. Cuana's N.S.* we acknowledge that the following basic principles of good autism practice can reduce the incidence of such behaviour:

- Ensuring all staff have an awareness of the strengths and difficulties associated with autism and co-occurring conditions
- Providing a structured and consistent approach which enhances predictability
- Supporting pupils communication in order to reduce frustration
- An understanding that social interaction can place additional demands on pupils over and above academic learning intentions

## St. Cuana's N.S. Kilcoona, Headford, Co. Galway

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- Addressing sensory needs throughout the day helps pupils to remain calm and focused
- Recording behaviours using eg. ABC/STAR charts and put in place Individual Behaviour Plans where necessary.
- Seek support from outside agencies if necessary, appropriate and available eg. Multi-D Teams/Middletown/NCSE etc.
- *St. Cuana's N.S.* will follow the school code of behaviour for all students in the ASD class.

### 9. CPD for Staff

Staff have a range of CPD opportunities to enhance their understanding of autism and to develop their autism practice. Autism specific CPD is delivered through the NCSE and Middletown Centre for Autism.

### 10. Collaboration

Autism can be a complex and challenging condition therefore we recognise the need to collaborate with a range of other people to provide a holistic and consistent environment. *St. Cuana's N.S.* make an effort to collaborate with the following where available:

Parents and carers

ASD Team

BOC Services

Autism Early Intervention

Speech and Language Therapists (SALTs)

Speech and Language Therapy Assistants (SALTAs)

Occupational Therapists (OTs)

Physiotherapists

Educational Psychologists (EPs)

Social Services Personnel

NCSE

Middletown Centre for Autism

### ■ Review

#### (a) Roles and Responsibilities:

It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum implementation of the SEN. Clare Naughton is responsible for coordinating this review.

Those involved in the review will include:

*Teachers*

*Pupils- health promotion committee/green flag committee*

*Parents-through communication with parents association & health promotion committee*

*Post holders/plan co-ordinator*

*BoM/DES/PDST*

**(b) Timeframe:**

This plan will be reviewed in 3 years.

■ **Ratification and Communication**

The Board of Management of St.Cuana's NS ratified this plan on 6th July 2023.

Signed:

*Tom Callanan - Chairperson - 6th July 2023*

*Sabrina Melvin - Principal - 6th July 2023*

This plan is available to view at the school by the parents on request.