



*Maryfield College*

*Excellence in Education*

# CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT POLICY FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

THIS POLICY HAS BEEN FORMULATED BY MARYFIELD COLLEGE TO ASSIST  
TEACHERS, PUPILS AND PARENTS IN MAKING AN INFORMED DECISION IN  
RELATION TO SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCEDURES AND TO COMPLY WITH NCSE  
AND DEPARTMENTAL CIRCULARS.



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## **Maryfield College**

### **SEN Policy**

#### **Introduction**

Special Education Needs are defined in the “Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act 2004” as follows ‘A special education need refers to a person who has a restriction in capacity to participate in, and benefit from education, due to an enduring physical, sensory, mental health, or learning disability, or any other condition (including exceptionally able pupils) which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition.’

For the purposes of this policy, we define inclusion as ‘The process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by considering and adapting its curricula, organisation and provision.’ The goal of inclusion is not to erase differences, but to enable all pupils to belong within an educational community that validates and values their individuality. This policy was formulated by the Principal and staff of Maryfield College, assisted by guidelines from the PDST and SESS facilitators.

#### **School Ethos**

Maryfield College is a teaching and learning community which looks to prepare pupils for life in all its aspects – personal, academic, professional and social. The school offers a secure, friendly environment based on mutual respect and support where pupils will be busy, happy and motivated to learn. Our Pastoral Care system seeks to provide, maintain and develop a sense of concern and encouragement for all pupils and staff so that all may thrive personally and academically. Our hope for our students is that they will graduate as lifelong learners who will make valuable contributions to society both locally and globally. We hope that their time in Maryfield will help them to develop strong values of respect for themselves and others in the global community. The school motto, *In Fide Stabiles*, urges us to be steadfast in our faith in the spiritual dimensions of life and in one another as valuable and valued partners in education

#### **Rationale**

The purpose of this document is to provide a set of guidelines for the use of additional teaching resources provided by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to support students with special educational needs (SEN). This policy is written in the context of a revised model for allocating Special Education Teaching (SET) resources which was introduced by the DES in September 2017. Effective provision for SEN students in Maryfield College is part an inclusive whole-school framework which emphasises effective teaching and learning for all students and good collaboration between the school, parents/guardians and students. This policy should be viewed as ‘evolving’ and should take account of developments in practice as they happen.

## Aims

At Maryfield College our Special Educational Needs policy will aspire:

- To provide an inclusive learning environment where all are encouraged to achieve their potential.
- To enable each student to develop social and personal skills, thus enhancing self esteem.
- To encourage students with special needs to participate in the full range of school activities
- To offer an education, which develops a variety of skills including practical, artistic, musical and sporting skills.
- To allow students with additional needs access to the curriculum and where possible, encourage students to sit Junior/Leaving Cert examinations.
- To encourage staff to avail of professional development from the S.E.S.S.

## Team

The SEN Team comprises of the school Principal, the Deputy Principal, the Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO), the Learning Support and Resource Teachers, the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) and the Guidance Counsellor. The school Guidance Counsellor has an important role in collaborating with the SEN Team. The SENCO is responsible for managing, organising and monitoring the provision of support for SEN students under the direction of the Principal.

## Supporting Documents

### Legislative Framework

This policy takes cognisance of the following legislation:

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Equal Status Act (2000)
- The Equality Act (2004)
- The Education Welfare Act (2000)
- The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004)
- The Disability Act (2005)
- Looking at our Schools A Quality Framework for Post Primary Schools (2006)
- Circular No: 0014/2017: Special Education Teaching Allocation

### **Supporting Publications:**

The following publications were consulted in writing this policy:

- Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines (DES, 2007) Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (DES, 2017)
- Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support – Guidelines for Teachers

## **Categories of Special Educational Needs**

The various categories of special educational needs, the definitions of these categories, and the criteria for the allocation of additional resources and the procedures for application are set by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and are as follows:

- Physical disability
- Hearing impairment
- Visual impairment
- Emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems
- Severe emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems
- Mild general learning disability
- Borderline general learning disability
- Specific learning disability
- Moderate general learning disability
- Severe or profound general learning disability
- Autism/autistic spectrum disorder
- Pupils with special educational needs arising from an assessed syndrome
- Specific speech and language disorder
- Multiple disabilities

## Continuum of Support: Special Educational Needs (SEN)



Implementation of the Revised Special Education Teaching Model (2017)

In Maryfield College we will use the DES Continuum of Support framework to engage in a three-step process in identifying and responding to our students' needs. This framework recognises that SEN occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, from transient to long term, and

that students require different levels of support depending on their individual 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. (DES Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with SEN in Mainstream Schools, p.6)

### A Three-Step Process to Support SEN Students:

#### Step 1: Identification of Need

Maryfield College operates a policy of early identification of the academic, social and emotional needs along with the physical, sensory language and communication difficulties of SEN students through:

- Prior to school entry: Enrolment Form: Opportunity for parents to inform us of SEN
- Transition Meetings with Feeder Schools
- CAT4 Test
- Open Day: Conversations with Parents
- Contact with parents if deemed necessary based on CAT4 Results
- Education Passport
- Assessment Reports from external agencies given to us by parents

Upon school entry:

- Formal Assessment: New Group Reading Test (NGRT)
- Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT4) where deemed appropriate
- Teacher observations.
- Care Team observations: Weekly meeting of Principal, Deputy Principal, SENCO, Guidance Counsellor.
- My thoughts about school checklist.

## **Step 2 – Meeting Needs (Special Educational Needs, A Continuum of Support, p.5-35)**

### **Creation of Student Support Files**

When SEN students are identified through the process outlined above a Student Support File will be created for each of those students in response to their individual needs. Student Support Files will be created through a collaborative process involving the SEN Team, Subject Teachers, parents, the student and sometimes external professionals.

The Student Support File will allow the SEN Team and Subject Teachers to document progress over time and it will assist us in providing an appropriate level of support to students in line with their level of need.

Following a period of intervention and review of progress, a decision will be made regarding the appropriate level of support required by the student. This may result in a decision to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or to move to a higher or lower level of support. Each student's Support File will be added to their profile on VS Ware so that all teachers will have access to relevant information.

Student Support Plans will set out agreed targets, strategies and a time-frame for review. This will help teachers to differentiate their subject teaching to meet the needs of their students and to set specific targets related to their subject areas.

Milder, transient needs will be met through classroom based support by the mainstream teacher i.e. differentiation. Individualised support will be provided for students with more complex and/or enduring needs (DES Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with SEN in Mainstream Schools, p.11 - 12)

SEN occur on a continuum and therefore the needs of SEN students in Maryfield College will be supported on the basis of a continuum as follows:

### **Stage One: Classroom Support:**

Classroom support will be the most common response to emerging needs – the subject teacher, the student and the parents will discuss the nature of the problem and consider strategies which may be effective.

### **Stage Two: School Support:**

Where classroom support is not enough to fully meet the student's needs the subject teacher will involve the SEN Team in the problem solving process. Information will be gathered through formal and informal assessment and a School Support Plan will be created.



### **Stage Three: School Support Plus:**

This process will be initiated if, in reviewing the School Support Plan it is agreed that the student is not making adequate progress. If a student's needs are severe and/or persistent the SEN Team will liaise with the student, the parents, the Subject Teachers and personnel outside the school in the assessment and intervention process. The information from Classroom Support and School Support will provide the starting point for problem solving at this level. A School Support Plus Plan will be drawn up based on the information gathered.

Actions May Include:

- Specific classroom strategies
- Individualised teaching methodologies
- Differentiation

### **Step 3 - The Review Process**

A review of Classroom Support involves the subject teacher, parents and student and should focus on progress made by the student. The outcome may be that the student continues to have a Classroom Support Plan, no longer requires a Classroom Support Plan or School Support will be initiated.

A review of School Support may be needed where classroom support is not enough to fully meet the student's needs the subject teacher will involve the SEN Team in the problem solving process. Information will be gathered through formal and informal assessment and a School Support Plan will be created.

A review of School Support Plus will be initiated if, in reviewing the School Support Plan it is agreed that the student is not making adequate progress. If a student's needs are severe and/or persistent the SEN Team will liaise with the student, the parents, the Subject Teachers and personnel outside the school in the assessment and intervention process. The information from Classroom Support and School Support will provide the starting point for problem solving at this level. A School Support Plus Plan will be drawn up based on the information gathered.

Students' progress in relation to achieving their targets will be regularly and carefully monitored through the Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus process outlined above. This will be done through formal and informal assessment and observation and reports from Subject Teachers, year heads, parents and students.

## **Student Support Plans (SSP)**

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) creates a statutory requirement to have education plans for individual students with special educational needs.

The purpose of an SSP is to guide the provision of services, to encourage effective teaching and learning and to promote access to a full curriculum.

### **May/August/September**

Set Team gather information on incoming first years

### **September/October**

Student targets are set and Student Support Plan is written.

Leaving Certificate Race Application.

### **November/December**

Junior Certificate Race Application

### **January/February**

Review of Student Support Plans

### **May**

Student Support Plan review and end of year gathering of information.

## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

### **Key Roles within the School**

#### **Board of Management**

The Board of Management has a responsibility for the provision of an inclusive education to all students.

#### **The Principal and Deputy Principal**

The principal has responsibility for the day to day running of the school and ensures the learning needs of all students including those with special educational needs met within the learning environment and resources provided by the Department of Education & Skills.

#### **Mainstream teachers**

Mainstream teachers have a responsibility to differentiate for their students to enable all to advance and affirm their ability to learn.

Teachers have access to information regarding students with Special Educational Needs and treat such information in a sensitive and confidential manner. This information includes:

- A register of students with Special Educational Needs.
- A description of each student's learning disability, including strengths, areas of difficulty and recommendations to encourage differentiation in the mainstream classroom.
- Information in relation to granting of Reasonable Accommodations for Certificate Examinations.
- On request, teachers have access to view reports including psychological assessments. These are stored in a secure filing cabinet in the Resource Room.
- Information on various disabilities with guidelines for teaching and learning (Special Education Support Service folder).
- Online SESS library.
- Access to resources/ information booklets.
- Liaison with SET team.
- Teachers can use a referral form should they have concerns in relation to a student.
- Teachers keep parents informed regarding students with Special Educational Needs, through parent teacher meetings, school reports and by being available to meet with parents from time to time as requested.

## **The SET Teacher**

Gathers information

- Organises timetable for students with Special Educational Needs.
- Informs staff of relevant information regarding students with Special Educational Needs.
- Completes students profiles/ SSPs
- Examples of areas covered include literacy, numeracy, communication, organisation, social skills, study skills.
- Weekly meetings with Principal, Deputy Principal, Career Guidance and School Counsellor.
- Administers standardised and diagnostic tests.
- Contact with outside agencies.
- Reviews students progress.
- Is available to talk with parents.
- Purchases resources .
- Involved in application for SEN hours.
- Advises on and assists parents and students with completion of Reasonable Accommodations applications for State Examinations. (Where feasible within school resources students who have been granted a reasonable accommodation will have this applied to some mock Junior and Leaving cert exams) .
- Reviews DATS results with Career Guidance.

## **Guidance Counsellor**

There is ongoing liaison between the Guidance Counsellor and the SET Teacher.

Meetings are held once a week. Various topics discussed include:

- Monitoring of students with Special Educational Needs.
- Referral of students.
- Assessment/ aptitude tests and results.
- The Guidance Counsellor has an important role to play in assisting students at different stages of schooling and helping them in career decisions. Students are given opportunities to explore their strengths, interests and options.
- Individual advice is given in relation to application for DARE.
- The Guidance Counsellor also offers counselling.

## **Year Head /Class Tutor**

- Supports and facilitates the creation of an inclusive environment through the Pastoral Care System.
- Helps in the transition from primary school.

## Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

The duties of the SNA are assigned by the principal. The primary role of the SNA is to assist the student(s) with Special Educational Needs and to manage the learning environment in an effective manner. The SNA makes a valuable contribution in providing inclusivity for the assigned student(s).

## Parents

Maryfield College understands that parents play a crucial role in the education of their children. To facilitate positive parental contribution the following supports are in place. In January, an information meeting is held for pupils entering the following September. Parents are informed about the operation of the school, school subjects offered, and are made aware of the difference their child will experience in the transition from primary to secondary school. This meeting assists the parents in finding out about the school and gives them an opportunity to ask questions.

During their first year, there is a social evening where students provide a musical performance for their parents. Teachers/parents are given a chance to meet in an informal environment.

- An information evening for parents of third years re: Senior cycle.
- An information evening for parents of students re: Fourth year.
- Assistance in helping their daughter choose subject options is available if required
- Parents can provide a valuable insight into their child's learning styles, strengths and needs and the development of a Student Support Plan.
- Access to school homework journal.
- Text for parents.
- Parent-Teacher meetings are essential as opportunities are there for parents to speak to individual subject teachers about difficulties. This collaboration is crucially important especially to students receiving special education.
- Arrangement of additional meetings, where required.
- Exam reports.
- School website.
- Telephone discussions.
- Parents Association.

## Students

Students are encouraged to discuss their strengths, areas of difficulty and targets in a confidential and supportive manner, and to monitor their own progress. It is hoped that students take a sense of ownership in their learning and help draw up Student Support Plan's.

The role of the Student Council, Prefect system and extracurricular activities allows an environment where students can contribute to the development of an inclusive school and provide opportunities for social and personal development for all.

Students work is displayed throughout the school, in classrooms, on notice boards and on school corridors, contributing further to a sense of belonging and inclusion.

## Key Roles and responsibilities within the Continuum of Support

	Subject Teachers	Specialist teachers (learning support/ resource/ language (EAL*)/ guidance counsellors/ HSCL*/ tutors/ heads of year)	School Management
<b>Support for All</b>	Differentiate teaching and learning activities Create positive classroom environment, including use of positive and constructive feedback Assess & monitor progress Create opportunities for success Communicate concerns to colleagues Collaborate with specialist teachers	Collection and analysis of school-wide screening data, including in-take screening, transfer information, attendance and behavioural records Collaboration with subject teachers	Leadership in developing relevant whole school policies: enrolment/ assessment/ inclusion Strategic management of implementation of policies and practices Strategic support for evidence based interventions
<b>School Support (for Some)</b>	As above, plus Contribute to group or individual planning and review Implement agreed strategies Communicate progress and concerns to co-ordinating teacher	As above plus Diagnostic testing Liaising with parents Gathering information from subject teachers/ other staff Plan, implement and review individual and/or group intervention Seek external professional advice, as needed Undertake tasks of co-ordinating teacher as needed	As above plus Assign roles and responsibilities Keep records of those receiving this level of support
<b>School Support Plus (for a Few)</b>	As above plus Prepare information for IEP planning meetings Implement individualised and specialist programmes and strategies Direct the work of SNAs* in the classroom	As above plus Plan, implement, monitor and review specialist and individualised responses Direct the work of SNAs in the school	As above plus Compliance with statutory requirements when EPSN* is implemented.

\*EAL- English as an Additional Language  
\*HSCL - Home School Community Liaison  
\*SNA - Special Needs Assistant  
\*EPSN - Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004

## Stage One: Classroom Support

### **The Subject Teacher**

- Liaises with parents regarding initiation of Classroom Support process.
- Seeks advice from the SEN Team.
- Keeps the Principal informed of Classroom Support Plan.
- Maintains a record of relevant information.

### **The SET Team**

- Provide advice and resources (Checklist and Classroom Support Template) to subject teacher to assist him/her in the assessment process and development of Classroom Support Plan for the student

### **The Principal**

- Note that a Classroom Support process is being implemented.

## Stage Two: School Support

### **The Subject Teacher**

- Consults with the SEN Team and remains responsible for working with the student in the classroom

### **The SET Team**

- Consult with teachers, the student and his/her parents in creation of School Support Plan
- Seek advice from external professionals.
- Make School Support Plan available to all teachers on VSWare
- Provide additional support for the student through Team Teaching/Small Group Sessions
- Co-ordinate the review of the School Support Plan
- Maintain a record of relevant information

### **The Principal**

- Records decision to implement School Support Plan

### **Other Professionals**

- Provide advice to SEN Team

## **Stage Three: School Support Plus**

### **The Subject Teacher**

- Contributes to assessment and planning and remains responsible for the student in the classroom. Provides classroom supports.

### **The SET Team**

- Review the outcomes of interventions in the Classroom and School Support Plans.
- Co-ordinate the assessment of the student's learning/social/emotional difficulties
- Co-ordinate development of School Support Plus Plan in collaboration with the student, parents, teachers, SEN Team external professionals.
- Provide additional support for the student through Team Teaching/Small Group/1:1 Sessions.
- Monitor and support interventions □ Review School Support Plus Plan in collaboration with the student, parents, teachers, SEN Team external professionals.

### **The Principal**

- Record the initiation of the school Support Plus process
- Ensure that a file is maintained containing records regarding consent of the involvement of external professionals, the assessment process, interventions, reviews and records of earlier school and classroom support processes.

### **Other Professionals**

- Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists etc may be indirectly involved, offering consultation or advice via the SEN Team.



## Work offered by the SET Team

Students who have a recognised special education need may be given an opportunity to learn at their own pace through a support setting. For example, a student with a Specific Learning Difficulty may receive support in all or some of the following areas:

### Reading/ Literacy

- Books of appropriate level and of appropriate interest
- Pre-teach subject vocabulary
- Vocabulary and phonetics developed
- Increase basic sight/ social vocabulary
- Word attack skills
- Develop skills of using contextual clues
- Paired reading
- Improve and develop fluency and accuracy when reading
- Attempt to cut down on omissions/substitutions/repetitions
- An enjoyable experience

### Comprehension skills:

- Cloze tests
- Multiple choice answers
- Get students to make up questions
- Develop information seeking techniques
- Train in scanning strategies
- Improve capability to establish main idea
- Increase reading for meaning

### Writing:

- Encourage free style
- Handwriting
- Motor co-ordination
- Letter formation
- Neatness
- Organisation
- Develop written vocabulary through experience
- Writing checklist (analyse own writing)
- Increase word variety
- Sequencing/paragraphs

### **Spelling & Grammar:**

- Edit work
- Spelling strategies – look/cover/write/check
- Familiarise spelling patterns
- Awareness of rules
- Auditory / syllabification

### **Listening:**

- Follow instructions
- Retain information
- Develop an ability to attend and interpret receptive language

### **Esteem:**

- Regular success
- Develop a sense of belonging and involvement
- Link between practice and progress

### **Organisation:**

- Project planners
- Study timetables/ skills
- Use and management of homework journals

## Resources and Support Services

The following websites, documents and resources are to provide guidance to staff, students and parents/guardians on the use, organisation and deployment of additional teaching resources for pupils with special educational needs. This guidance is provided in the context of a revised model for allocating special education teaching resources which was introduced by the Department of Education and Skills in September 2017.

- National Council for Special Education:  
<https://ncse.ie/>
- National Educational Psychological Services (NEPs):  
<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/NEPS-Home-Page.html>
- Continuum of Support Resource Pack:  
[https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps\\_special\\_needs\\_resource\\_pack.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_special_needs_resource_pack.pdf)
- Continuum of Support Guidelines for Teachers:  
[https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/inlinefiles/neps\\_post\\_primary\\_continuum\\_teacher\\_guide.pdf](https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/inlinefiles/neps_post_primary_continuum_teacher_guide.pdf)
- Guidelines for Promoting Positive Behavior:  
[https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/inlinefiles/sped\\_guidelines\\_pupils\\_difficulties\\_pp.pdf](https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/inlinefiles/sped_guidelines_pupils_difficulties_pp.pdf)
- Assessment Instruments: Circular 35/2017:  
[https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0035\\_2017.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0035_2017.pdf)
- A Study of Transition from Primary to Post-primary School for Pupils with Special Educational Needs:  
[https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/Resources/Transition/Transition\\_Study\\_NCSE.pdf](https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/Resources/Transition/Transition_Study_NCSE.pdf)
- Dyslexia Ireland:  
<https://www.dyslexia.ie/>
- Dyspraxia Ireland:  
<https://www.dyspraxia.ie/>
- Autism Ireland:  
<https://autism.ie/>

## **Development, Implementation and Review of Policy:**

The provision of additional support for SEN students is a collaborative responsibility shared by all. The Board of Management, Principal, Deputy Principal, SEN Team, Subject Teachers, parents and children are all stakeholders and contribute to implementation and monitoring of special educational needs policy. The Board of Management of Maryfield College has overall responsibility for the provision of education to all students in the school, including SEN students. The Board of Management facilitates the inclusion of SEN students through inclusive enrolment policies and by promoting inclusive whole-school policies and procedures. Under current legislation the Principal has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the needs of SEN students are met. Therefore, the principal should work with the Board of Management, teachers and parents in the development, implementation and review of the SEN policy to promote the inclusion of students with SEN.