



## Special Education Needs Policy

### 1. Introduction

Dominican College Wicklow is a voluntary second - level, girls-only school, with a Catholic Dominican ethos and under the trusteeship of Le Chéile. It was founded by the Dominican sisters in 1870.

The Dominican motto 'TRUTH' is the inspiration of our work. Dominican education is concerned with the education of the whole person. Strong emphasis is placed on each student attaining her full potential academically, but care is also taken to ensure that each student benefits from an enriching all round education. Strong emphasis is placed on each student attaining her full potential through an enriching, comprehensive education. In an atmosphere of trust and friendliness students are encouraged to develop responsibility, initiative, personal growth and leadership so as to help them take their place in society as mature citizens. This Special Education Needs (SEN) Policy will be reviewed regularly, as directed by the Board of Management. In this policy document the term 'parent' is taken to include 'guardian'.

### 2. Policy Context

The SEN Policy has been developed following consultation between students, staff, parents, Principal and Board of Management. The Education Act (1998) states that a recognised school shall provide education to students which is appropriate to their abilities and needs and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, it shall, as far as resources permit, ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with special educational needs, are identified and provided for. As trustees of Dominican College Wicklow, Le Chéile is committed to the successful implementation of all relevant Education legislation, in particular the Education Act (1998), the Education Welfare Act (2000), the Equal Status Act (2000 & 2004), the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004), the Disability Act (2005), the Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (2007) and the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016. The policy is also informed by the Department of Education & Skills publication: *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post Primary Guidelines*. Having regard to the well-being and the common good (as determined by the Board of Management) of students and staff, the school is committed to the principles of:

- Inclusion
- Equality of access and participation in the school
- Equality of opportunity
- Parental choice in relation to enrolment in the school
- Respect for diversity of values, belief, traditions, languages and ways of life in Irish society
- The holistic development of students of Dominican College Wicklow.

The Board of Management is charged with a special responsibility by Le Chéile to ensure an appropriate education for each student, a responsibility in keeping with the Mission Statement of Dominican College Wicklow. This policy is devised in consultation between the Board of Management, Senior Management, the Learning Support Department, Parents, Students and Staff.



### **3. Inclusion**

Dominican College Wicklow welcomes students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and recognises the need to provide that the education of people with such needs shall wherever possible take place in an inclusive environment.

It aims to ensure that students with SEN are encouraged to participate in school life as far as is reasonably practicable and that no student is bullied or singled out for unfair treatment as a consequence of her disability. Pro-active steps are taken to ensure that the school provides an inclusive environment that is supportive and non-judgemental. There are currently two qualified Learning Support teachers in the school, providing targeted support to students with SEN. The Diversity Committee, facilitated by the Deputy Principal, is currently preparing an Action Plan on inclusion and diversity as the school is working towards the award of its first Yellow Flag.

### **4. Rationale**

The school bases its rationale on the three major principles laid out in the EPSEN Act:

- The education of people with SEN shall take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs
- People with SEN shall have the same right to avail of and benefit from appropriate education, as do their peers
- People with SEN, like their peers, should leave school with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity, in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives.

### **5. Categories of Special Educational Needs**

Dominican College Wicklow aims to provide for the following categories of students with Special Educational Needs:

- General Learning Disability - Borderline/ Mild General Learning Disability, Mild General Learning Disability, Moderate General Learning Disability, Severe & Profound General Learning Disability
- Emotional Disturbance and/or Behavioural Problems — Childhood Psychosis, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiance Disorder
- Specific Learning Disability — Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia
- Physical Disability — e.g. Motor dyspraxia, Spina Bifida, Cerebral Palsy
- Speech and/or Language Disorders – Verbal dyspraxia, specific verbal language disorders
- Sensory Disability - Visual impairment, Hearing Impairment / Deaf, Dual Sensory Impairment (Deaf-blindness)
- Exceptionally Able and Dual Exceptionality
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (e.g. Asperger's Syndrome)
- ESOL students (English for students of other languages)



## **6. Roles within Resource/Learning Support Department**

All students, and in particular students designated as having special needs, are supported by class teachers. Depending on the learning needs of the student, she may also be helped in a small group, with team teaching, with individual learning support or resource teaching (in class or on an individual basis or combination of both). In some cases the DES may provide the additional support of a Special Needs Assistant (SNA). The allocation of Resource hours is awarded by the National Council of Special Needs (NCSE) and the DES. This model of organisation generally includes school-based consultation with the following:

- Parents and students
- Principal
- Year Head
- Guidance Counsellors
- Class teachers
- Feeder Primary school
- National Education Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Other relevant professional agencies where appropriate.

## **7. Implementation Procedures**

- a. Parents enrolling their daughters in DCW are asked on the enrolment form that the school be informed in writing, once enrolled, of any special learning/emotional or physical needs of the incoming student. Parents are requested to submit any psychological/educational assessments that have been carried out in the past and to inform the Principal if their daughter has availed of Learning Support or Resource Hours in Primary School
- b. In the Spring before commencing 1st Year, the Principal writes to the principals of feeder primary schools seeking written information on students enrolled in Dominican College Wicklow, including copies of the students' reports and education passport
- c. In September the Deputy Principal compiles the information from feeder primary schools on students' reports and education passports as well as their CAT4 Assessment results. The information is shared with the Principal, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor and Learning Support Team & may further help to identify Learning Support needs which will be communicated to the relevant subject teachers by the Special Education Needs (SEN) Co-ordinator
- d. In consultation with the SEN Department, the Principal ensures that applications are made to the Special Education Needs Officer (SENO) for SNA's, where appropriate
- e. The Learning Support Team tries further to identify students who may need support by examining the results of the CAT4 Assessment Test carried out in February in tandem with the earlier feedback from parents.
- f. From September 2017 Learning Support and Resource hours are allocated to the school from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and the DES. These hours are allocated to support students according to their identified needs. Students with existing Resource hours will continue to receive support appropriate to their needs. The continuum of support for SEN is composed of level 1 (in-class support), level 2 (small group withdrawal) and level 3 (individual support). The Principal, in



consultation with the SEN Co-ordinator and Team, allocates the available hours to all students entitled to additional resource / learning support, using the continuum of support outlined above and the personalised pupil plan, and makes every effort to optimise the resource allocation available.

## **8. Planning for Resources**

a. As soon as possible after enrolment, the parents of incoming students with special needs will be contacted by the SEN Co-ordinator / Principal to plan for the following year. The Principal / SEN Co-ordinator communicates feedback to the Deputy Principal, Learning Support Team, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor and Subject Teachers

b. The SEN Co-ordinator, in consultation with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor and Year Head, compiles a register of students with special needs. The needs of each individual student are discussed and explained at a staff meeting in late August

c. Individual tuition or small learning support groups are organised where appropriate. A learning plan or Personalised Pupil Plan (PPP) is developed by the learning support teacher to help meet the student's needs. The plan is shared with the student, her parents/guardians and all staff. The student and parents are involved in the preparation of the PPP

d. A Resource Teacher and /or SNA is assigned to specific students where the allocation permits or is granted.

## **9. Learning support in Action**

a. The Learning Support Team offers advice on learning, teaching and assessment strategies for students with special needs. The Learning Support Team suggest resources online which provides literature, strategies and advice for all teachers

b. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) is consulted where necessary

c. Each subject department is developing guidelines on the provision for special needs in their subject area

d. **Organisation of Learning Support:** Individual withdrawal from class / Small group withdrawal / Special Needs assistant where provided by the SENO / Reduced Timetable in exceptional circumstances / Help of staff with expertise / Computers and appropriate software programmes / Library & computer facilities / Differentiated materials within subject departments

e. A member of the Learning Support Team will assume the role of SEN Coordinator each year. The coordination role may rotate each year.

## **10. Provision for Students who wish to apply for Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations**

a. In occasional circumstances an appointment may be arranged for a student applying for Reasonable Accommodations with the Guidance Counsellor or with the NEPS psychologist who may carry out



assessment tests to decide on the needs of each applicant. This is organised by the Learning Support Team in consultation with the student's parents, senior management and Year Head.

b. Applications for RACE are processed by the SEN Co-ordinator in consultation with the Principal. The Principal will keep other relevant personnel informed, as appropriate (e.g. Parent, Deputy Principal, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Subject Teachers).

## **11. Roles and Responsibilities**

The care of students with SEN is the responsibility of the whole school community. A structured support programme is provided to students with SEN with the help of the collaborative efforts of all involved in the following roles:

### **Board of Management:**

- To ensure an appropriate education for each student, a responsibility in keeping with the Mission Statement of Dominican College Wicklow
- To ensure that the SEN policy is developed, ratified, supported, implemented and evaluated
- To consider reports from the Principal on the implementation of the policy and to consider any recommendations
- To ensure adequate accommodation and teaching resources, insofar as is reasonable, affordable and practicable
- To provide secure facilities for the correct and safe storage of records and information.

### **Senior Management:**

- To oversee the implementation of the SEN policy
- To foster and promote a culture of inclusion, respect for difference, kindness and support
- To liaise with the BOM, Learning Support Team, Staff, Students and Parents/Guardians in the development of a whole school plan for Learning Support and Special Needs
- To support the professional development needs of staff in teaching, learning and assessment of students with SEN
- To liaise with the Learning Support Team, Guidance Counsellors, Year Heads, Staff, Parents, Students and external agencies and professionals to ensure that the school makes every reasonable effort to provide for the support needs of students with SEN
- To monitor the implementation of the learning support programme and selection of students for supplementary teaching
- To provide staff professional development to increase teachers' knowledge and understanding of appropriate teaching and assessment methodologies



- The Principal considers the allocation of resource hours for incoming students with special needs, in consultation with the SEN Co-ordinator and Team, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor and Parents.

**Special Education Needs (SEN) Coordinator:**

- Co-ordinates the communication and work of the Learning Support Team
- Co-ordinate meetings of Learning Support Teachers and ensure that meetings are minuted, stored and communicated with Senior Management
- Has responsibility for the testing and assessment of students who may be in need of learning support
- Orders resource materials including software for learning support in cooperation with subject teachers
- Organises special examination timetable/venues and readers for In-House exams
- Meets with Senior Management from time to time, as necessary, to report on relevant matters
- Liaises with Senior Management, Guidance Counsellor, Year Head, Staff, Students, Parents and external professionals, as required.

**The Learning Support Team (Learning Support Teachers):**

- To create and foster a school climate of inclusion
- To liaise with Senior Management, Staff, Students and Parents in the development of a whole school plan for Learning Support and Special Needs
- To meet parents of incoming students with SEN and discuss their needs, and liaise with Senior Management in the planning for those needs
- Provide curriculum support for the Learning Support and class teachers and students by acquiring curriculum material that is age and interest appropriate and suitable for the required reading levels, providing assistance to students on a 1:1 or group basis in identifying resources for project work, acquiring of audio-visual materials and computer software as additional resources (e.g. audio books of English plays and comparative texts)
- To keep abreast of all developments in the area of SEN
- To establish structures and procedures for the implementation of the policy
- To ensure that Reasonable Accommodation is sought and where possible provided for SEN students sitting State Examinations, in consultation with the Principal. The Year Head and Guidance Counsellor will also be informed
- To inform staff of individual students' needs and suggest supports for effective teaching, learning and assessment of students with SEN
- To plan a Learning Support timetable and make this available to Senior Management
- To monitor and evaluate individual students/groups of students with SEN



- To liaise with Senior Management, Guidance Counsellors, Year Heads and Parents regarding information from primary schools and assessment reports
- In consultation with relevant students and their parents/guardians, to design and prepare personalised pupil plans for students with SEN and ensure that these are communicated effectively with staff and parents

**The Care Team:**

- To help to identify students requiring Learning Support and to help monitor whole-school supports put in place
- To refer to outside professionals and agencies as needed
- To provide student support in personal, educational and career development
- To consult with parents and staff

**Class Teacher:**

- To create a classroom environment that accommodates and takes cognisance of various learning needs and difficulties
- Responsibility for the progress of students in her/his classes
- To collaborate with the Learning Support teacher in identifying students who may have general or specific learning difficulties
- To attempt, as far as possible, to differentiate the curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of all students in the class using some of the following: modifying presentation and questioning techniques, group teaching, differentiation of homework, enlargement of text etc.
- Provides learning activities and materials that will ensure success and progress for all students
- To assist in the identification of students in need of Learning Support
- To bring any concerns regarding SEN to the attention of the SEN co-ordinator / team and the Year Head.

**Parents:** are expected and encouraged

- As soon as possible to contact the school to discuss their daughter's special needs so that the school can commence planning appropriate accommodation and supports
- To be proactive and supportive of the school in implementing this policy
- To use their unique knowledge of their daughter to further her learning plan
- To meet with teachers, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Senior Management, learning support teacher or Care Team where appropriate
- To provide support for homework and learning
- The school recognises the right of parents of students with special educational needs to be involved in and consulted about the programme of education available to their daughter. When a personalised pupil plan is being developed, parents will be consulted and will receive a copy of the plan. This plan will be reviewed annually and parents will receive a copy of the report. The school recognises the right of appeal of parents/guardians as set out in the



Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004. The school requests that all parents support the work of the school by providing all relevant information, ensuring regular attendance and encouraging supporting their daughter to participate positively in learning activities.

**Students with SEN:** are encouraged

- To engage positively with their personalised pupil plan, including at the planning and review stage
- To participate in their learning in a group, individual or class setting in a positive manner
- To develop ownership of the skills and strategies taught in a Learning Support setting
- Students with SEN will be consulted and involved in the development of their personalised pupil plan
- The school requires that all students participate actively and positively in the development of their own learning. This involves all students attending school regularly, participating positively in classroom activities and completing appropriate homework and assignments.

**Special Needs Assistant:**

The role of the SNA is pivotal in the care of some students with SEN and is recognised by the whole school community as being of enormous value. The duties of the SNA are outlined by the DES as follows:

- Preparation and replacement of equipment in classroom(s) in which the student(s) with special needs is/are being taught
- Assisting relevant students to board and alight from school buses. Where necessary travel as escort on school buses may be required
- Special assistance as necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. helping physically disabled students with typing or writing
- Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene
- Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks and similar activities
- Assisting the teachers in the supervision of students with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods
- Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom
- General assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the Principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature
- Where a Special Needs Assistant has been appointed to assist a school in catering for a specific student, duties should be modified to support the particular needs of that student.





## **12. Monitoring and Review Procedures**

- The Learning Support Team meet on a regular basis to discuss relevant issues
- The Learning Support teachers liaise regularly with Senior Management, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors and Parents
- Applications to the SENO for special educational resources take place regularly
- The Learning Support Teacher meets with parents of a student with special needs to collaborate and agree on a personalised pupil plan. The student herself participates in the planning and review of this plan
- Consultations take place with NEPS psychologist when necessary
- Meetings take place from time to time with SEN students to discuss their needs and how best those needs can be served
- Monitoring and Evaluation of the learning support programme will be conducted on an ongoing basis throughout the year by the Principal, Deputy Principal and Special Education Needs Coordinator supported by the Guidance Counsellor, Year Heads and Staff.

## **13. Record Keeping:**

- All records relating to assessments of individual students will be kept in a secure location;
- individual psychological assessments will be kept on file and the student's right to confidentiality will be respected;
- assessment records will be kept on file for 7 years after the student has left the school

Ratified by the Board of Management on: 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017

Date of review: April 2017

Signature of Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_