

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY
COACHFORD COLLEGE

I Mission Statement of School

Our school Mission Statement promotes the ethos of inclusion which informs our policy and provision for students with S.E.N. It stresses that “TOGETHER” we value learning, progress and achievement at every level, and nurture community.

II Objectives of Policy

The objectives of this policy are:

1. To establish the best practice and provision for students with S.E.N. in our school, in line with our Mission Statement.
2. To ensure the school’s inclusive ethos is facilitated
3. To clarify for all partners in education the ethos and procedures relating to S.E.N. provision in our school.

The purpose of the S.E.N. policy is to facilitate the meaningful inclusion of, and provision for, students with educational needs in our school, in line with our school ethos and legal obligations, and for the benefit of all the partners in education.

We promote an inclusive school environment in ethos and practice, endeavouring to provide a full education in line with the varied and diverse needs of all our students. We welcome such students into our school community; we recognise the extra support they require in a mainstream setting. In Coachford College, a special needs student is any student who has difficulty coping with the mainstream curriculum and/or school environment due to assessed specific or general learning difficulties; assessed syndromes; physical disabilities; emotional/behavioural disorders, or who raises concerns due to persistent lack of progress, either academically or behaviourally, in school. The content of the policy will be decided by the aforementioned, guided by legislative provisions and DES guidelines and current school provision.

III School Organisation, Classes and Structure

We have an established S.E.N. Department in our school, specifically to address issues and provisions relating to students with S.E.N. The S.E.N. co-ordinator works closely with all those involved internally and externally in providing for the education and welfare of all students with S.E.N. in Coachford College.

Parents and subject teachers may refer students about whom they have concerns to the S.E.N. Co-ordinator and discuss these concerns. Further action (assessment, extra help etc, as appropriate) may be agreed upon in consultation with parents/guardians and advice/support given to teachers.

The S.E.N. Co-ordinator is a core member of the Pastoral Care Team, liaising closely with the Guidance Counsellor, the School Chaplain, Deputy Principal and Principal, as well as Year Heads, Class Tutors and Subject Teachers. The S.E.N. Co-ordinator works in close co-operation with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor.

The S.E.N. Co-ordinator maintains close links with outside agencies such as the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS); the Special Educational Needs Officer (SENO) at the National Council for Special Education (NCSE); the State Exams Commission (SEC); the Department of Education and Science (DES); the Adolescent Guidance Clinic and appropriate specialists, including Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapist.

Class Structure

In Coachford College classes in First Year are organised in chronological order, also taking account of student requests in class placement.

In Second and Third Year, classes are organised in mixed ability except for the core subjects of English, Irish and Maths.

An optional Transition Year Programme is available to all students entering senior cycle and careful consideration is given to individual students' suitability to the programme through interview and consultation with class teacher, Year Heads, Subject Teachers and Parents.

Following Junior Cycle and/or Transition Year, all senior cycle students prepare for the traditional Leaving Certificate.

S.E.N. Team

- S.E.N. Co-ordinator
- Resource Teachers
- Learning Support Teachers
- SNAs

S.E.N. Students

These students fall broadly into two categories: Low Incidence and High Incidence students. These include:

- Learning Support Students
- B.M.G.L.D
- Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties – ADD/ADHD
- S.L.D Dyslexia
- Hearing and Visual Impairment
- Physical Difficulty – Dyspraxia
- Moderate General Learning Disability
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- E.S.O.L. Students

Coachford College will also support students who are identified as having difficulty where relevant reports have not been received. This is dependent on resources available at any given time.

Students identified through In-School Assessment and referrals from main stream staff are made a priority.

Identification and Assessment of S.E.N. Students

All students entering First Year are assessed prior to entry to the College in March. A screening test is corrected by the Special Needs Co-ordinator. Enrolment forms are processed by the Principal and Deputy Principal and parents are requested to forward any relevant reports to the College. The S.E.N. Co-ordinator meets parents/guardians of S.E.N. students, in order to identify the student's strengths and weaknesses. The S.E.N. Co-ordinator also visits and discusses incoming S.E.N. students with the Primary Schools in our catchment area with parental permission.

Formal testing of all First Year students takes place in March of First Year. Mainstream staff is requested to refer these students they believe to be struggling to the S.E.N. Co-ordinator.

Monitoring, Evaluation, Assessment and Reporting

Forms of assessment to be undertaken in Coachford College include:

- Informal classroom assessment by Subject teachers.
- Observation of students by Subject teachers and Learning Support teachers.
- Oral language discussions with students with special needs.
- The correction of exercises set by Subject teachers.
- Formal exams for all years at Christmas and summer by Subject teachers.
- Monthly assessments for Junior and Leaving Certificate students by Subject teachers.
- Screening tests to be set and corrected by the Special Needs Co-ordinator.

Records

- Files from National School Reports are to be copied and kept by the Special Needs Co-ordinator and First Year Year Head.
- They are to be regarded as CONFIDENTIAL.

Students with S.E.N. are offered full access to the same curriculum as all students. To support that access, S.E.N. teachers offer individualised support during Resource and/or Learning Support to address subject specific issues or needs the students may have, as well as general literacy skills. Resource teachers may be allocated to students specifically to support their progress in a particular subject or subjects identified as problematic by the student and teachers/parents in order to facilitate their continued access to such subjects.

In Learning Support, teachers focus on literacy skills with small class groups from Second Year on, in particular to support curricular access.

The integration and mainstreaming of students with S.E.N. is facilitated by pre-entry preparation and consultation in conjunction with the First Year Head; students are placed in mixed ability mainstream classes in First Year; in Second Year, English, Gaeilge, Mathematics and French are streamed, based on First Year performance in exams and class work. The other subjects continue with the mixed ability mainstream setting; students can progress as they develop, subject to class base and parental agreement; SNA support may be provided initially where possible and they are active at break times to facilitate and encourage integration socially.

Provision is made on an individual basis to address specific needs or difficulties which may hamper integration, e.g social skills or physical difficulties.

Differentiation is encouraged in mainstream subject classes to facilitate students with S.E.N. It is the responsibility of all subject teachers to provide for students with S.E.N. in the classroom.

Students with laptops or other devices are facilitated to enable them to access the curriculum. Data or overhead projectors and computers are available to support teachers and students.

Resource and Learning Support Provisions

A variety of provisions are made for students with S.E.N. depending on individual needs and entitlement:

- Small group withdrawal
- One to one withdrawal
- In-class Support By Teachers

The emphasis is always on integrating and supporting the student in mainstream classes as far as possible.

The S.E.N. Co-ordinator liaises with parents and outside agencies, as and when necessary. Contact may be initiated by any of the education partners. Parents or external agencies may ring school and request a call or meeting with the Co-ordinator, to be arranged at mutually convenient times.

Meetings with parents are also arranged in conjunction with the Subject teachers, Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Year Heads, the Deputy Principal and Principal as and when appropriate. Joint feedback or team meetings comprising of various personnel, including SNAs, may be held prior or post-psychological or other assessment, or at other times, for the purposes of co-ordinating provisions for the student. All recommendations for students, based on psychological reports from outside bodies are distributed to subject teachers, with parental permission, to be incorporated into the mainstream class setting. These recommendations are also available to Staff in the Information for Staff section of Coachford College Moodle with students identified by code.

Contact with external agencies is maintained by the S.E.N. Co-ordinator, Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Deputy Principal or Principal, as appropriate, for advice, support and resources to adequately meet the needs of students with S.E.N.

Parental involvement, support and consultation is actively encouraged on an on-going basis in Coachford College.

All teachers involved in S.E.N. are encouraged to keep a list of their students' teachers and subjects, as well as others S.E.N. personnel working with them, and to collaborate with them in supporting student learning.

A list is compiled by the S.E.N. Dept containing names of students that have reports. Teachers are then asked to indicate on that list the students they are teaching. These lists are given to the S.E.N.

Dept and a copy of the recommendations from the students report is given to the teacher in order for the teacher to follow the recommendations and implement strategies from individual reports. Resource teachers who are teaching students on an on-going basis may be asked to adapt their timetables if a particular student is absent. With regards to this, the S.E.N. Co-ordinator will timetable other resource students who would benefit from extra teaching. Alternatively, it may be appropriate for a teacher to team teach with another teacher at that time.

Mainstream teachers are also encouraged to liaise with the S.E.N. Department and teachers involved in delivering Learning Support and Resource when they feel specific areas need to be addressed. S.E.N. teachers have a flexible approach to supporting teaching and learning.

In house Resources to support students with S.E.N. are available from the Resource room: teachers are welcome to access these resources, following procedures for borrowing and returning them, as laid down by the S.E.N. Dept Funding for resource materials may be obtained on request from the Principal.

In conjunction with parents/guardians, the student and relevant personnel, the S.E.N. team sets short and long term targets based on agreed outcomes defined in assessments and with due regard to students' strengths and needs. The immediate needs of the student inform these provisions, e. g state exams.

To assist with meeting the needs of the student, a core practice of data gathering and analysis needs to be established. All students are assessed on first entering the school, using the standardised assessment tests, as laid out earlier in this document. The results are reviewed by the S.E.N. team in conjunction with the Subject teacher and Year Head, as well as all other necessary information. Teacher feedback and in-class monitoring is regularly sought regarding student strengths, areas of difficulty etc.

Inclusive teaching skills in the school are encouraged by:

- Mixed ability classes
- Gathering and making available suitable reference material for teachers promoting and assisting the development of inclusive and differentiated methods of teaching generally and in their subject areas
- Developing an inclusive homework and assessment policy
- On-going support of personal and whole staff professional development
- S.E.N. Co-ordinator supports on a personal and/or subject department level promoting inclusive teaching skills
- Using resources such as "Signposts" and other relevant material the S.E.N. Dept provides teachers with information and strategies that can be used for a range of different disabilities in their classes

Information about students is discussed orally or by written means, keeping in mind confidentiality as a priority. Information is transferred between mainstream teachers/tutors/Year Heads or the S.E.N. Co-ordinator.

Basic information regarding students' needs and suggested provisions in the mainstream classroom for students with S.E.N. are available in the Resource Office and Resource Room.

The National Strategy to improve Literacy and Numeracy plays an important part when teaching all students. Literacy encompasses not only reading but also oral language, media studies and digital media. Numeracy is not just an understanding of numbers but also includes problem solving in our day to day lives.

We promote independent living among our students so as to prepare them for life after school.

The S.E.N. Dept liaises with staff and parents in order to achieve these goals.

The S.E.N. Co-ordinator works closely with the Year Heads and Guidance Counsellor to facilitate the dissemination of information to teachers. Each teacher also has a post box and individual messages may be delivered there to reach the teacher directly.

Suitable provision is made for pupils who have S.E.N. arising from High Incidence and Low Incidence disabilities.

Teachers are encouraged to use the sample S.E.N. file which includes Education Plans, Scheme of Worksheet and other relevant letters for individual students, prepared by the S.E.N. Dept yearly.

Roles and Responsibilities of the relevant parties:

The Principal and Board of Management are responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented. The S.E.N. Co-ordinator may monitor the implementation of the policy under the guidance of the Principal, Deputy Principal and the Board of Management.

1. Subject teachers:

- To recognize the varied learning styles in existence in individual classes
- To monitor the effect of the policy and to identify students experiencing difficulty.
- To differentiate class material and ensure the integration of all pupils.
- To provide support and guidance in class.
- To liaise with Learning Support teachers, especially in relation to consideration for students with special educational needs.
- To request assistance of SNA's if necessary
- To co-operate with Learning Support/Resource teachers in class support.

2. S.E.N. Co-ordinator:

- Records of students learning support/resource in primary school are received by the Learning Support Team.
- Maintains S.E.N. files and updates regularly.
- Administers tests carried out in school.
- Provides S.E.N. updates at Staff Meetings.
- Early screening programme.
- Subject teacher/class teacher participation.
- Liaises with SENO in relation to Reports, Resources SNA's and applications to NCSE.
- Liaising with parents/outside agencies assessment e.g. NEPS, SESS, CAMHS, SEC, NE*B, NCSE
- Timetabling for supplementary teaching
- Organises SEN meetings
- Makes applications for R.A.C.E.
- Processes exemptions from Irish
- Liaises with School Authorities regarding Timetabling
- Communicates with the parents on an on-going basis in relation to providing information on how best to support their child
- Provides support to former students who experience difficulties after leaving Second Level Education

3. Students:

- Students to be made aware of their own individual needs
- Become more independent in their learning
- To be aware of their own learning styles
- Be part of their own learning plan
- To be able to work with different teachers/SNA's to help their learning

4. Parents:

- To support the policy
- To provide suitable conditions for homework assigned
- To ensure that the suggested amount of time is spent on homework
- To liaise with the S.E.N. Co-ordinator in the school regarding any suggestions/difficulties they may have

The school has an active Parents Association which elects a council to represent parents. The decisions of the Parents Association are communicated to the S.E.N. Dpt. In addition, there are two parents representatives on the Board of Management and have an input in school policy.

Parents work in co-operation with the S.E.N. Dept, their co-operation is essential to the progress made by the students. Information gathered from parents forms the basis of "Individual Plans" for pupils. Information evenings are held each year for parents of all in-coming First Years. S.E.N. Co-ordinator outlines the importance of communication between parents and teachers at this meeting. These meetings are attended by all parents.

5. SNAs

Roles in accordance with Circular 1076 and the Principal:

- Preparations of class-rooms
- Assistance to disabled students
- Assist with clothing and toileting
- Assist with supervision of breaks
- Accompany small groups withdrawn from class
- General assistance with class teachers; SNAs may not act or substitute for teachers
- Where SNA is appointed to a specific student, duties should be modified for the student.

6. Principal

- The Principal together with the Deputy Principal, Subject teachers, Tutors, Year Heads and the S.E.N. Co-ordinator should:

- Establish structures and procedures for the implementation of the policy
- Monitor the implementation of the policy

7. Board of Management

- To ensure that the policy is developed and evaluated from time to time
- To approve the policy
- To consider reports from the Principal on the implementation of the policy.

This Special Educational Needs Policy will be reviewed and evaluated on a general basis, and any proposed amendments forwarded to the Board of Management.

It shall be reviewed and evaluated regarding individual students on an on-going basis, as appropriate.

The S.E.N. Dept, in consultation with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor and teaching staff, is responsible for conducting the review and evaluation of the policy.

Progress is evaluated formally and informally, with due reference to the individual difficulties of the student.

The methods include but are not limited to: mainstream and S.E.N. teacher observation and evaluation; SNA observation feedback; parental feedback regarding progress; formal school exams to indicate academic progress; on-going standardised assessment in Learning Support and/or Resource.

It is the responsibility of the Principal and the Board of Management to ensure that the S.E.N. Policy is compliant with current legislation and is non-discriminatory.

Other policies within our school must also take cognisance of S.E.N. students:

- Curriculum
- Assessment
- Homework
- Transition from Primary School
- Staff Development
- Field Trips/School Tours
- Anti-Bullying
- Child Protection
- Pastoral Care
- Lap Top policy

IV Legal Context

International Conventions and Agreements along with recent Oireachtas Legislation are relevant to the policy and should be referred to in the preamble. Various sections from the following Acts should be highlighted:

- Education Act 1998
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- Equal Status Act 2000
- Education for Persons with Disabilities Act 2004
- EPSEN (Education for Persons with Special Education Needs) Act 2004
- Child Protection Guidelines 2011.