



Special Educational Needs Policy

2020

Introduction

Galway Educate Together Secondary School endeavours to be a vibrant school community in which all members experience a real sense of active participation and belonging. The school aims to provide an education for students that contributes both to their academic and personal development as well as to the social, economic and cultural development of their community. Our school acknowledges and respects the rights of all students to be educated in a welcoming, positive and inclusive environment.

Every individual brings something unique to their own educational experience. For those students who require supports to aid their learning our staff as a whole and our SEN Department, in particular, endeavour to support our students to “Achieve Excellence Together”.

“To teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the conditions for the production or construction of knowledge” – Paulo Freire

Galway Educate Together Secondary School provides a mixed ability setting in line with research including that undertaken by the ESRI [Junior Cycle Education: A Longitudinal Study of Students](#) and our principle aim is the setting of high academic standards for all students. We endeavour to achieve the appropriate balance between setting a challenge for our students which stretches them academically while at the same time encouraging them according to their ability. We believe that there is the potential for growth and development in every young person.

The Academic Monitoring system ensures that students at all levels are tracked regularly during the year to support them to achieve their level of ability. Intervention is organised for any student who is not achieving their potential.

Our student care system is founded on the basis of strong relationships where the Tutor knows their students very well personally and academically and follows up with them to ensure that they are achieving their potential. Tutors are actively involved in

academic monitoring and there is regular feed-back to parents verbally as well as through parent-teacher-student meetings and regular reports.

As the school grows Guidance and Counselling support will be provided to help focus all students on careers and help deal with socio-personal issues that may arise. Teachers also focus on study skills and good homework practices to maximise academic achievement.

EDUCATE TOGETHER AFFIRMS THAT:

<p>Multi-denominational schools have the right to be treated no less favourably than other schools within the Irish educational system, in accordance with their needs and their identity.</p>	<p>Children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds have a right to an education that respects their individual identity whilst exploring the different values and traditions of the world in which they live.</p>	<p>Parents are entitled to participate actively in decisions that affect the education of their children. In particular they have the right to decide what kind of school reflects their conscience and lawful preference.</p>
<p>The state has a duty to take the identity of the multi-denominational sector fully into account when deciding on policy that affects the establishment and development of schools.</p>		

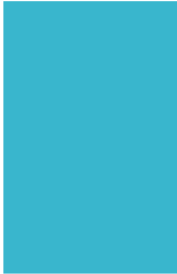
and COMMITS ITSELF TO:

Support the establishment of schools which are:



<p>Multi-denominational i.e. all learners having equal rights of access to the school, and children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds being equally respected.</p>	<p>Learner-centred in their approach to education.</p> <p>Co-educational and committed to encouraging all children to explore their full range of abilities and opportunities.</p>	<p>Democratically run with active participation by parents in the daily life of the school, whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers.</p>
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and in areas where the demand for such a school exists:



<p>Promote fuller awareness and recognition of the identity of the multi-denominational sector at all levels in Irish society and abroad.</p>	<p>Participate in appropriate structures and activities concerned with the future development of education in Ireland and abroad.</p>	<p>Promote a future where multi-denominational education will be as freely available to parents as any other educational option they may choose.</p>
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Defining Special Needs Education

“Special Needs” is defined as “a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition...”

(Government of Ireland, 2004b, section 1)

This definition is highlighted in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act - EPSEN- (2004). In Galway Educate Together Secondary School we focus on inclusive education and finding reasons to celebrate the achievements of our students as opposed to focusing on disabilities. We believe that all students are on a continuum of need and we include in our definition those students who learn differently because of exceptional ability. Our philosophy is centred on students and how we can benefit their learning.

Legislation that contributes to the SEN Policy

Galway Educate Together Secondary School is dedicated to successful implementation of the educational legislation, the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000 and the EPSEN Act 2004. We are also fully committed to the principles of these Acts.

Section 2 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 requires that:

“A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with:

- the best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under this Act
- the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated.”

Aims of Galway Educate Together Secondary School’s SEN Policy

The aims of this policy are built not only with regard for government legislation but in Galway Educate Together Secondary School’s ethos. Our policy aims to:

- be inclusive and ensure that students who experience barriers to learning share in the whole school experience as much as possible with due regard to Section 2 of the EPSEN Act referenced above
- create a welcoming environment for both students and their families
- ensure that the structure of the school is such that all students have access to the school
- collaborate with parents, authorities and services to promptly assist in identifying specific learning needs of all students
- outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to students who need particular support
- support students through the use of the whole school methodology of Restorative Practices unless it is inappropriate in a given situation to do so.

Monitoring and Review Procedures:

- The Special Educational Needs department monitors the procedures as outlined in the policy on a regular basis.
- The procedures are reviewed by the BOM every two years.

Roles and Responsibilities.

The role of the **Board of Management** is to:

- ensure that the policy is developed and evaluated over time

- approve the policy at the outset and periodically thereafter at meetings of the Board
- consider reports from the principal on the implementation of the policy
- ensure that appropriate funding is allocated for SEN resources

The role of the **Principal** includes the responsibility to:

- oversee a whole-school approach to assessment and screening to identify needs and to guide the allocation of appropriate supports. It is important to note that additional teaching supports are deployed according to identified needs rather than being based on a diagnosis of a disability
- ensure effective engagement with feeder primary schools to support the transition of students with special educational needs
- in collaboration with the in-school management team, discharge a key function in the deployment of staff, allocation of resources, organisation of students and timetabling
- ensure that systems are in place for effective sharing of relevant information on students' needs with all subject teachers
- facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to the education of students with special educational needs, and ensure that all school staff (subject teachers and special education teachers, guidance counsellors, special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area
- ensure that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, students and external professionals/agencies
- establish structures and procedures for the implementation of the Special Educational Needs policy
- monitor the implementation of the policy
- ensure that the policy is reviewed after an appropriate length of time

- establish lines of communication with the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO).

The role of the **Special Educational Needs Organiser/Co-Ordinator** includes the responsibility to:

- Identify the students in need of additional teaching support, the level of intervention required to best support the students' learning and set clear learning targets at the appropriate level of the Continuum of Support.
- Liaise with teaching colleagues to ensure appropriate planning, teaching and assessment methods are utilised to best effect for the student's learning. These might include among other supports, team teaching or assistive technology. Small group or individual withdrawal may be necessary but kept to a minimum
- Organise and deploy special education teaching resources allocated to the School liaising with the Principal and deputy principal and Special Educational Needs Officer as necessary
- Establish a tracking and recording system to ensure that a record is maintained of all students who are receiving additional teaching support and of their progress in response to the established interventions.
- Work in conjunction with the SEN Coordinator and SNA Team to ensure that the SNA timetable is reviewed weekly to reflect the changing needs of students with SNA access.
- Continually update the SEN shared folder, so that all staff are aware of the strengths as well as needs of students and the types of supports they require in their learning.

Parents are encouraged to:

- support the school policy via the Continuum of Support
- support the students at home

- communicate concerns to the school
- attend student support planning meetings and reviews
- provide the school with the most up-to-date reports and recommendations, and assessments in relation to their child.

Subject Teacher:

It is the responsibility of the classroom Teacher to ensure that each student is taught in a stimulating and supportive classroom environment where all students feel equal and valued. The Teacher will have access to all information that is likely to be relevant to teaching or supervising a student with special educational needs and shares responsibility with the SEN Coordinator in ensuring they have this information. The classroom Teacher also has a central role in identifying and responding to students with additional needs. These responses will be informed and assisted by collaboration with colleagues, parents/guardians and others such as the local SENO. The Teacher will assist the SENCO in supporting the students by completing any documentation included in our SEN process.

The classroom Teacher will also make specific accommodations for a student within the class as a result of concerns about a student's progress, application, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers.

When a student with significant and complex care needs has access to support from an SNA the classroom Teacher will work closely with the SNA. However, the class Teacher continues to have primary responsibility for teaching and learning and for the social and emotional development and progress of the student.

Special Needs Assistant:

Galway Educate Together Secondary School recognises the invaluable role of Special Needs Assistants and their important contribution to the school. As clarified in The Special Needs Assistants Scheme 2007/8-2010:

“Special needs assistants are allocated to assist Teacher in meeting the care needs of students.”

(The Special Needs Assistants Scheme 2007/8-2010, p33).

Section 22 (1) of the Education Act 1998 states the primacy of the Teacher in the education and personal development of students in schools. The classroom Teacher is responsible for educating all students in his/her class, including any student with a special educational need. The class Teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in his/her classroom, including students with special educational needs.

SNAs are recruited specifically to assist in the care needs of students with disabilities in an educational context. SNAs therefore do not have a teaching/pedagogical role and it would not be appropriate for students with special needs to be taught by unqualified personnel. Though the SNA can provide valuable assistance to the Teacher in ensuring that the student is able to access education, the role of the SNA is not to provide additional tuition, as this is the role of qualified special education Teacher who may assist the Teacher to provide additional teaching to students with special educational needs.

One of the roles of the SNA is to promote the independence and autonomy of the students where appropriate. As Galway Educate Together Secondary School empowers students to achieve their own level of excellence, SNAs act as a support to assist students in achieving their educational goals and reaching their full potential. The SNA’s timetable is reflective of this as it evolves on a weekly basis based upon recommendations made in weekly meetings between the SNA Team, SNA Coordinator and SEN Coordinator. The SNA’s role in helping students become more able and independent, allows them to work more closely with other students.

The type of significant care needs that students may have can be varied. Given the variety of medical conditions that may present it is not possible to list all of the care needs that may arise here. However, examples of the primary care needs which would be considered significant – and which might require SNA support are:

- **Assistance with feeding:** where a child with special needs requires adult assistance and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time
- **Administration of medicine:** where a child requires adult assistance to administer medicine and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time
- **Assistance with toileting and general hygiene: (including catheterisation)** where a child with special needs cannot independently self-toilet, and until such time as they are able to do so
- **Assistance with mobility and orientation:** on an on-going basis including assisting a child or children to access the school, the classroom, with accessing school transport (where provided, school Bus Escorts should, in the first instance, assist a child to access school transport), or helping a child to avoid hazards in or surrounding the school.
- **Assisting Teacher to provide supervision in the class, playground and school grounds:** at recreation, assembly, and dispersal times including assistance with arriving and departing from school for students with special needs where the school has made a robust case that existing teaching resources cannot facilitate such supervision.
- **Non-nursing care needs associated with specific medical conditions:** such as frequent epileptic seizures or for students who have fragile health.
- **Care needs requiring frequent interventions including withdrawal of a student from a classroom when essential:** This may be for safety or personal care reasons, or where a child may be required to leave the class for medical reasons or due to distress on a frequent basis.
- **Assistance with moving and lifting of children, operation of hoists and equipment.**
- **Assistance with severe communication difficulties** including enabling curriculum access for students with physical disabilities or sensory needs (See also section 9) and those with significant, and identified social and emotional difficulties. Under the direction of the Teacher, this might include assistance with assistive technology equipment, typing or handwriting, supporting transition, assisting with supervision at recreation, dispersal times etc.

The tasks noted above do not provide an exhaustive list and are the primary care support tasks for which access to SNA support will normally be provided.

The following tasks are the type of **secondary care associated tasks** which SNAs will often perform, and are reflective of the tasks detailed in Circulars 30/2014 and 71/2011. However these would not in themselves normally constitute a reason for the allocation of SNA support. The tasks 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. To assist with cleaning of materials.
- Assistance with the development of Personal Student Plans for children with special educational needs, with a particular focus on developing a care plan to meet the care needs of the student concerned and the review of such plans.
- Assist Teacher and/or Principal in maintaining a journal or care monitoring system for students including details of attendance and care needs. Assist in preparation of school files and materials relating to care and assistance required in class by students with special needs.
- Planning for activities and classes where there may be additional care requirements associated with particular activities, liaising with class Teacher and other Teacher such as the resource Teacher and school Principal, attending meetings with parents, SENO, Psychologists, or school staff meetings with the agreement and guidance of class Teacher/Principal
- Assistance with enabling a student to access therapy or psycho-educational programmes such as anger management or social skills classes, under the direction of qualified personnel, including class Teacher or support Teacher.
- Assistance to attend or participate in out of school activities: walks, or visits, where such assistance cannot be provided by teaching staff.

Support for Students with Behaviour Related Care Needs

Students with behavioural related care needs receive appropriate interventions in school through individualised planning, whole-school student management strategies (including the promotion of positive relationships between and among staff and students), and additional psycho-educational programmes (such as anger management or social skills classes) and psychiatric/medical interventions, as required.

Students with challenging behaviour needs, in the first instance, are supported by their class Teacher, other school staff members, and by whole school polices on the management of behaviour in schools. The responsibility for the overall progress of students with behavioural difficulties lies with the classroom Teacher.

The emphasis in our school situation is on the development of well-co-ordinated interventions in response to the child's identified needs. The provision of appropriate teaching and health supports, as required, should result in improved behaviours, leading to improved educational outcomes for children with Emotional Behavioural Disorder (EBD) or Severe Emotional Behavioural Disorder (SEBD).

SNA support is only provided where it is clear that behavioural management strategies have not been successful to date and where it is demonstrated how access to such support can assist with on-going planning and intervention for the child.

The care role of the SNA, in instances where SNA support is sanctioned to assist with behavioural related care needs, is concerned with assisting the Teacher to meet the care needs of the child by:

- preserving the safety of the student and others with whom the student is in contact

- assisting to ensure the prevention of self-injurious or destructive behaviour
- reinforcing good behaviour on the child's part and acting as a positive role model for the child
- Assisting with recording data in relation to student behaviour and behavioural development

(Department of Education Circular, 0030/2014)

Students with exceptional ability in Galway Educate Together Secondary School

Every school has a percentage of students who demonstrate exceptional ability. Our teaching staff provide appropriate extension activities to ensure that students with exceptional ability are kept focused and academically stretched.

Assistive Technology

The SEN Department encourages and supports students who have been granted assistive technology by the SENO. The school's cloud computing system, OneDrive or Microsoft Teams is used to save, store and share all work of students completed both in school and at home. Subject to the provisions of Section 14 of Circular 0010/2013 regarding the transfer of equipment between schools, the equipment will remain the property of the school.

The school's management authority have responsibility for maintenance, repair, insurance etc. of the equipment. The management authority will ensure safe custody and careful handling of the equipment. A designated Teacher in cooperation with the SNA Team has responsibility for the management of the equipment and for monitoring its effective use within the school. Equipment purchased should normally be kept in the school. However, the pupil in question may, with the consent of the principal, use the equipment at home.

Although the equipment will be sanctioned for a particular pupil the equipment will, as a rule, remain the property of the school and will be available for allocation to subsequent pupils with similar needs. Where the school has no further requirement for the equipment or where a pupil transfers to a different school, the SENO may allocate it to another school in the interests of meeting needs to the greatest extent possible.

Procedures

Internal Referral

Many students will have their special educational needs identified prior to entry.

- upon enrolment parents are asked to identify any supports previously provided for their child
- the Principal and or the Special Educational Needs Coordinator visits all feeder primary schools in May prior to entry to establish what supports were received in primary school
- the Principal and or the Special Needs Coordinator meets with every parent/guardian prior to entry
- students requiring support visit the school in small groups before their entry to the school. They are brought around the school to explore and familiarise themselves with their new surroundings.

An entrance assessment for Galway Educate Together Secondary School may also be used to identify students who may need extra support. These results are reviewed by the SEN team and may lead to the students being referred for further assessment.

Teacher Referral

The class Teacher can refer any students they may have concern for to the SEN team.

If, in collaboration, the Principal, the Deputy Principal, SEN co-ordinator form the view that the students may require additional support, parents will be consulted.

Parent/ Guardian Referral

Galway Educate Together Secondary School greatly values the parents'/ guardians' involvement in their child's education. Therefore, if a parent/ guardian is concerned about their child's education or feel that the child is not benefitting or being challenged from their education they should contact the school. With approval from parents/ guardians the school will begin the referral process that has been outlined.

External Referral

When it is agreed that a student may have Special Educational Needs, a referral to an outside agency may be made for assessment (i.e. Psychological Services). Parents may decide to have their child assessed privately by a qualified educational psychologist.

Records

Maintaining Records

To ensure that the SEN department runs smoothly, we pride ourselves on maintaining accurate and confidential records. Each student who receives learning support in the department has a Student Support Plan. In accordance with legislation record keeping is also taken during meetings with outside agencies, staff and parents.

Student Files

Each student requiring support will receive their own individual file, which is saved securely in an SEN folder in Office 365. All teachers have access to these support files in order to be able to plan for the needs of their students. They also contribute to the support file in terms of mainstream classroom support and recording of Learning Support when appropriate. The students also have a file in the SEN filing cabinet. This is accessed by the SENCO, Principal and Deputy Principal. Access to others is by permission only. Confidentiality is at the forefront of the SEN department.

Documentation on the students may include:

1. Results of assessment.
2. School reports, reading, writing and spelling assessment.
3. Exemptions from languages (if applicable)
4. Psychological and medical reports.
5. Student Support Plan

Models of Provision

Students may receive additional support through:

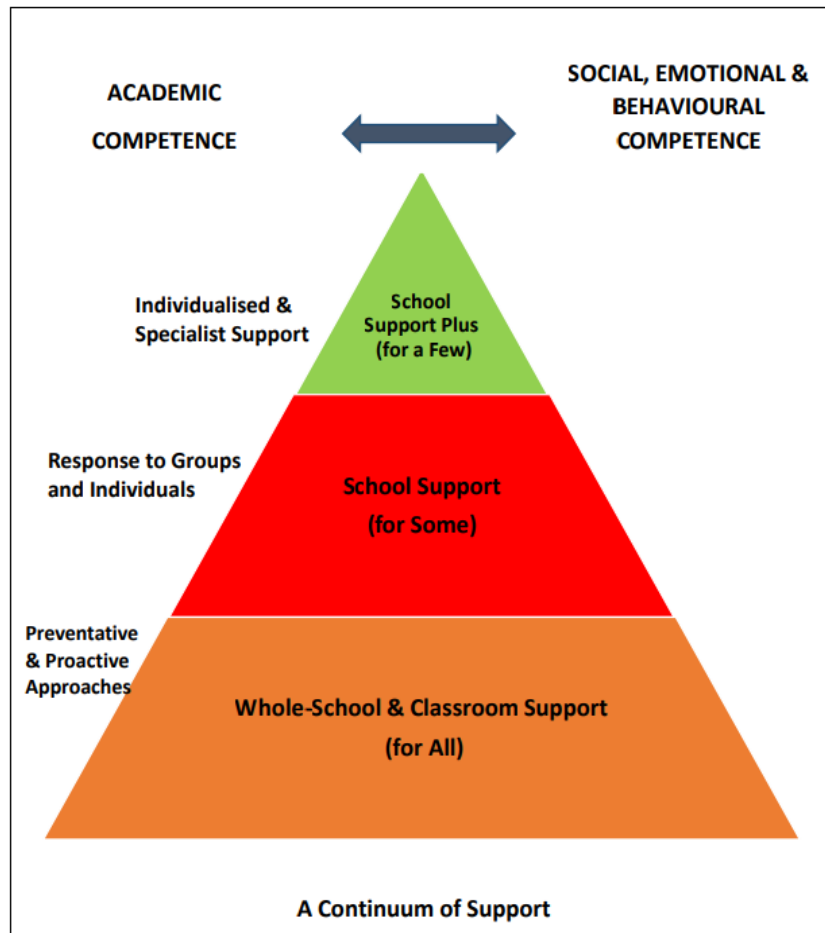
- Team/co teaching
- the provision of an appropriate programme of learning
- L2LP programmes for Junior Cycle
- reduced timetable (only in exceptional circumstances)
- small group or one to one teaching
- inclusion of SNA in specific classes
- appropriate support and accommodation for outlined by DES and NCSE for assessment

Intervention recommended to each student depends on the extent of their Special Educational Needs. All provisions are reviewed at the end of the school year.

The Continuum of Support:

The Continuum of Support Framework recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long term, and that students require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs. Using this framework helps to ensure that

interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support, and that they are informed by careful monitoring of progress.



Student Support File:

A Student Support File (which includes the Student Support Plan) will be prepared to allow the team to plan interventions and to track a student’s pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates teachers in documenting progress over time and assists them 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 is made as to 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 move to a higher or lower level of support.

Assessment

Entrance Assessment

Identification of needs is essential. All students are tested using a standardised test either prior to entry or upon entry.

Ongoing Assessment

The SEN Department uses a variety of methods to conduct assessments for students requiring support. These methods are both formal and informal and are used to create and review the individual targets within the Student Support Plan. Assessment tests used in Galway Educate Together Secondary School are all Department of Education approved tests.

External Assessment

The SEN Co-ordinator in collaboration with the Principal may deem it necessary to contact an external educational assessment by an educational psychologist. Prior to this an assessment referral is assembled by an SEN team member, which includes Teacher reports and assessment within the School.

Communication

SEN Meetings

The SEN Department meets every week to discuss any issues with students requiring additional support.

Parents

Communication with parents/ guardians is essential. Every new parent/guardian of each student requiring additional support will be invited to Galway ETSS to meet with the co-ordinator to discuss the continuum of support.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on : January 20th 2020