



## **Newport College Resource and Learning Support Strategy**

Motto: - "A school where every child matters"

Mission Statement: - "We strive to provide a holistic education in order to maximise the potential of each student academically, emotionally and socially, with respect for self, others and the environment as core values, embracing individuality & honesty to enable a productive culture of learning and teaching".

This strategy document takes cognisance of "The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)", "Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs-Post Primary Guidelines" (Department of Education & Science (DES) Inspectorate: 2007) and "Exceptionally Able Students-Draft Guidelines for Teachers" (NCCA: 2007).

### **Definitions:**

- (a) Students with special educational needs are those who are restricted from participating in and benefiting 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. (EPSEN Act 2004).
- (b) Exceptionally able students are those understood to require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for in the general cohort of students.

### **Why Resource/Learning Support?**

- To facilitate integration of students with learning difficulties and physical difficulties into the second-level system.
- To increase access of students with learning difficulties to a greater level of mainstream subjects.
- To ensure that students with learning difficulties have access to state examinations, particularly where special concessions are required.
- To overcome and improve difficulties with literacy and numeracy.
- To boost the self-esteem and self-confidence of students with learning difficulties.

- To promote reading for pleasure and enjoyment outside of school in a positive manner among students with learning difficulties.

### **Resource/Learning Support may be provided in our school for:-**

- A student who has had a psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support / Resource teaching, subject to availability of resources
- A student who has a Specific Learning Difficulty or a General Learning Difficulty - low incidence and high incidence students. The specific exceptionalities catered for to date include:
  - Borderline/Mild General learning Disability
  - Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties –ADD/ADHD
  - Specific Learning Difficulty – Dyslexia
  - Sensory difficulties (hearing and visual impairments)
  - Physical difficulties – Dyspraxia
  - Moderate General learning disability
  - Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorder (e.g. Asperger’s)
  - ESOL students (English for students of other languages)
- A student who received Learning Support in Primary School, subject to availability of resources.
- A student identified during the entrance assessments.
- A student identified by their teachers as having difficulty with one or more of their subjects.
- Consideration is given to students with emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- A student with traveller status.
- A student with physical difficulties.
- A student who requires opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for the general cohort of students are deemed to be exceptionally able. It is estimated that 5-10% of the school population will demonstrate very high levels of attainment in one or more of the following areas:
  - general intellectual ability or talent
  - specific academic aptitude or talent
  - visual and performing arts / sport.
  - leadership ability
  - Creative and productive thinking
  - Mechanical ingenuity
  - Special abilities in empathy, understanding and negotiation

***Newport College may be in a position to support students who are identified as having particular difficulty in accessing the curriculum where relevant diagnoses/reports have not been submitted. This is dependent on the resources and staffing available at any given***

*time. Students identified through in-school assessment and referrals from mainstream staff are prioritised through consultation and the consensus of the Special Needs Team.*

## **Identification of students in need of Resource/Learning Support**

All students present at the entrance exam are assessed prior to entry to the College in September. Formal testing of incoming first years generally takes place in March each year and students' literacy and numeracy skills are assessed. Enrolment forms are processed in November/December and parents/guardians are requested to forward any relevant reports to the College pending agreement with the relevant primary school.

The Special Educational Needs co-ordinator meets primary school personnel and pupils in order to glean any other relevant information to identify student's individual strengths and the difficulties they may be experiencing.

Further formal testing may be carried out throughout the school year to ascertain further needs if any, and mainstream staff is requested to refer those students they believe to be struggling to access different aspects of the curriculum.

Resource and learning support provision endeavours to derive maximum benefit for each individual.

## **Newport College Resource/Learning Support Team**

The Special Educational Needs team comprises of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Special Needs co-ordinator, Learning support teacher(s) and Home School Liaison officer. The SEN team endeavours to help create the best environment possible for SEN students to develop to their optimum potential.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Principal:**

- Has overall responsibility for ensuring that the special educational needs of students are met.
- Works with the Board, Staff and Parents/ Guardians in the development of a whole school plan for Learning Support and Special Needs.
- Ensures that mainstream teachers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the education of students with special needs.
- Monitors implementation of learning support programme and selection of students for learning support.
- Consults and liaises with outside bodies and agencies.
- Provides for in-service for staff.
- Promotes the involvement of parents of students with special educational needs.

- Makes application to the D.E.S. for resource hours for incoming students with special needs.
- Liaises with the SENO in relation to all matters SEN including; assessment reports, learning support/resource provision, SNA access and applications to the NCSE
- Processes exemptions from Irish
- Facilitates and chairs SEN department meetings

### **Special Needs co-ordinator**

- Co-ordinates SEN provision in the school
- Liaises with NEPS psychologists regarding assessment of priority students
- Liaises with outside agencies including; NEPS, SESS, CAMHS, SEC, visiting teachers for the hearing and visually impaired, NEWB and NCSE as required.
- Communicates with relevant staff regarding essential information regarding SEN students
- Provides updates and details of all matters SEN to the School Authorities
- Maintains and updates SEN files
- Makes application for Reasonable Accommodation to the SEC
- Liaises with the School Authorities regarding SEN provision, IEP meetings.
- Strives to develop a climate of confidentiality regarding the sensitive information of all the partners involved in SEN

*The Special Educational Needs co-ordinator, in consultation with other members of the SEN Department, identifies those students in need of reasonable accommodation in school and state examinations. Psychological reports that recommend reasonable accommodation for certain students must be acted on and applications forwarded to the 'Reasonable Accommodation' section of the State Examinations Commission.*

### **Student Participation**

Students have a critical role to play in the development and evaluation of their own learning.

They can become:

- More aware of their own individual needs and strengths
- More independent as learners and enabled towards responsibility for their own learning
- Successful as learners and the ability to develop skills and strategies to maximise their own learning

- More aware of different teaching and learning styles
- Part of the development of their own individual plan and learning targets and outcomes
- More aware of working co-operatively with others and understanding the concept of a team approach to enquiry and formulation of responses to tasks set.

### **Parental Involvement**

Parents are the significant partners in developing policy and planning for SEN students as they understand their needs best. A meaningful attempt to address those needs can be made through the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), created in partnership with parents. Furthermore, they can also identify more readily the individual strengths of their sons/daughters, information that can be most valuable in the teaching methodologies employed to educate the child.

Information evenings, award ceremonies, religious ceremonies, competitive events, leisure activities and JCSP celebrations also provide ample opportunities for parents to participate actively in their sons/daughters education and they are generally well attended.

### **Home School Community Liaison officer**

HSCL role is to maximise active participation of the student in the learning process in particular those who might be at risk of failure. Active co-operation between home, school and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interest of the student is fostered and awareness is created in parents of their own capacities to enhance their child's education. In Newport College the role of the HSCL in SEN is as follows:

- Be of support to the SEN team
- Attend all SEN meetings where possible
- Advise the team when and if necessary
- HSCL communicates and liaises with parents/guardians of SEN students and prospective students

### **Duties of Special Needs Assistants**

The duties of the special needs assistants are assigned by the Principal Teacher in accordance with the duties of the post as outlined in Circular 30/2014 which is included in Appendix 2 and is also available at: [http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0030\\_2014.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0030_2014.pdf)

## **Organisation of Class Groups:**

In First Year, a mixed ability policy is in place. In Second and Third Year, classes are banded for some subjects with regular class reviews taking place. Senior cycle for all subjects operates a mixed ability policy with the exception of Higher Level Maths. For more information see Appendix 1.

## **Organisation of Learning Support:**

Currently, we have a mixed model of Learning Support in operation.

- Individual Withdrawal  
The SEN Department may withdraw students from subjects in consultation with the respective teachers and with parents. In some cases, students with S.E.N. may be on reduced timetables to facilitate their particular needs.
- Small Group Withdrawal
- Group Withdrawal
- Team Teaching
- Reduced Timetable
- Whole Class groups

Team-teaching involves two teachers providing tuition in the classroom and has many benefits for SEN students including; providing continuity of learning, building social skills and developing team building skills with their peers. Both teachers share responsibility for the teaching of the class and special educational needs students benefit from in-class support, immediate feedback and affirmation in the classroom.

Learning support provision is generally centred on the development of literacy and numeracy skills, along with special emphasis on social and communication skills where the need arises.

Resource and Learning support hours are applied for by the Principal. Applications for resource are forwarded to the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) and they, in turn, are forwarded to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), an organisation under the remit of the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

The main aim of learning support is to help pupils with learning difficulties to improve and enhance their literacy and numeracy levels, which in turn facilitates easier accessibility to the curriculum. Learning support teachers are employed to ensure that pupils with mild learning difficulties achieve maximum proficiency in the aforementioned areas of literacy and numeracy before leaving post primary education.

The **National Strategy** to improve literacy and numeracy, **Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life**, needless to say, plays an integral role when teachers are determining and planning their strategies. Literacy encompasses the capacity to read, understand and critically

appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language printed text broadcast media and digital media. On the other hand, numeracy is not limited to the understanding of using numbers but includes the ability to use mathematical understanding and skills to solve problems and meet the demands of day to day living in complex social settings.

### **Irish Exemptions:**

Irish exemptions will only be granted when the criteria outlined in Circular M 10/94 are met. All students who have an Irish exemption at Junior Cycle will be offered as much support teaching at this time as our resources allow. This allocation may vary from year to year.

### **Information:**

In September a register of all pupils with S.E.N. is compiled and made available to staff. The register includes:

- Name of pupil
- Category of difficulty
- Support being provided
- Potential areas of difficulty
- Potential provision at State Exams.

Parental permission is sought in advance for the transfer of this information.

If a psychological assessment is available, a summary of the needs and recommendations is forwarded to all relevant staff. This information is only given with the permission of the parents.

### **House and Mock Examinations**

Every effort is made to offer Reasonable Accommodations to students in receipt of them for school examinations.

## **Appendix 1 : Learning Support 2015/2016 (to be reviewed in December 2015)**

### **First Year**

#### **English**

First year class groups of 19 students will be divided into two smaller sub groups of 9 & 10. These class groups will be mixed ability giving each child the opportunity to learn and benefit from the smaller resource groupings. Within this class group the teacher will get to opportunity to maximise the learning capabilities of each student to achieve to their full potential.

Differentiation will be key to the success of this group.

- Well abled students will benefit from the quality of teaching delivered by the teacher but will also strive on their opportunity for independent learning with the teacher having a bank of worksheets that will keep the students engaged and challenged.
- Students who may find the subject and literacy in general difficult will benefit from the individual (or smaller group) time the class teacher will be able to afford them and also benefit from language skills and verbal reasoning arising from whole class discussion.

#### **Maths**

The first year group will have a base class and for three of five periods allocated will be together as a whole group. For the other two periods a number of specifically identified students\*\* will be withdrawn for a learning support class where they will compound the learning from the three whole class sessions. The remainder of the class will progress on an alternative topic these days.

In this situation the target learning support group are offered the opportunity to maximise their learning on specific targeted topics essential for the progression in Junior Cycle maths. Preparation and planning for the base class will include core topics and also specialised topics targeted at the level of the smaller base class.

\*\*Testing, allocation of resources, primary school reports & special needs.

#### **Irish\***

A number of students in first year are exempt from Irish. These students can avail of a resource class co-scheduled with Irish. The resource teacher should link in with the learning support coordinator to facilitate a programme of work for these students. Literacy and numeracy should be core elements of this programme.

\*One first year student who came from England does not take Irish as a subject. This student will remain in the Irish class as the resource programme for the student is not necessary.



## **2<sup>nd</sup> Year to 6<sup>th</sup> Year**

### **Maths & English**

Following a full year of work and assessment by the teachers of Newport College it may be considered in the best interest of students to stream class groups where resources allow.

This is currently the case in Maths in second year, and English and Maths in 3<sup>rd</sup> Year.

### **Irish**

A number of students in other years are exempt from Irish. These students can avail of a resource class co-scheduled with Irish. The resource teacher should link in with the learning support coordinator to facilitate a programme of work for these students. Literacy and numeracy should be core elements of this programme.

