



Columba College
Additional Educational
Needs Policy

INTRODUCTION

Columba College endeavours to respond to the educational needs of all its pupils. It aims to create and sustain a caring, flexible, Inclusive, supportive and safe environment in which staff and students feel valued, motivated and stimulated in their efforts to develop into caring and responsible adults and to realise their full potential. Columba College believes that its objectives are best achieved in a safe and secure environment which, while recognising individual rights and responsibilities, encourages commitment and shared responsibility for the achievement of excellence and for the common good.

The school believes that all children and young adults should be valued equally, (irrespective of any individual needs or differences) and is committed to making effective provision, through the Department of Education and Science and other agencies, for students who have learning support/additional educational needs. The school is committed to the highest standards to ensure that all students achieve to their true abilities in an inclusive environment. All staff are committed to supporting and nurturing students, and to supporting their families and those who work with them, where appropriate. The best possible working practices are based on respect, trust, honesty and integrity.

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

As set out in The Education Act 1998, The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004 our aims are to:

1. a) Give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children including children who have a disability or who have other special educational needs, as they relate to education.
2. b) Provide that, as far as is practicable and having regard to the resources available, a level and quality of education appropriate to the needs and abilities of the people of the state.
3. c) Ensure that people with special educational needs are educated in an inclusive environment, as far as is possible.
4. d) Affirm that people with special educational needs have the same right to avail of, and benefit from education as children who do not have those needs
5. e) Provide for the greater involvement of parents in the education of their children and decision-making.
6. f) To ensure that our school cooperates and works closely with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the Health Services Executive with regard to the education of people with special educational needs, and the Special Education Appeals Board – where decisions made about the education of people with special educational needs can be appealed.
7. g) To ensure that our school does not discriminate in relation to:

- The admission or the terms and conditions of admission of a student
- The access of a student to any course, facility or benefit provided
- Any other term or condition of participation in the school by the student.
- The expulsion of a student or any other sanction

To ensure that students with learning support/additional educational needs are identified and provided for in a fair and equitable manner so that their learning potential and their sense of self-worth and dignity is developed and respected.

To ensure that all members of staff are aware of the learning support/additional educational needs of students and of the contribution they, the staff members, can make in this area.

To ensure that literacy / numeracy is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.

To ensure that learning support/additional educational needs is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.

To ensure that students with learning support/additional educational needs are offered a broad, balanced, relevant, progressive, continuous and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.

To ensure, in as far as is practicable, that all students, including those with additional educational needs, leave school with an adequate level of certification to enable them enter the work place or further education, as appropriate.

To encourage the creation of a caring, welcoming, stable and stimulating environment in all of the school, which encourages each child to develop intellectually, socially, morally, and physically according to their abilities.

To set high standards for students with learning support/additional educational needs and to provide them with appropriate guidance in order to encourage them to achieve to their full potential and to prepare them for their roles as adult members of society.

To ensure that the achievement of students with learning support/additional educational needs is recognised, celebrated and encouraged.

To develop staff expertise in supporting students with learning support/additional educational needs.

To encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at school and at home.

To ensure a commitment to informed decision-making based on secure evidence.

To co-ordinate the advice, guidance and support of other agencies in supporting students with educational needs.

To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources.

To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of practice in support of students with additional needs.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to all students attending Columba College and who have learning support/additional educational needs, in either short or long term.

THE LEGAL CONTEXT

This policy is drafted in the context of the specific provisions and definitions with regard to children with disabilities and additional educational needs and the statutory requirements placed on Boards of Management by

The Education Act 1998

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000

The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004

The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004

This policy is also drafted in consideration of the Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill 2003.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

The school through, its normal operating procedures, shall ensure that adequate additional teaching and resource support is applied for and allocated as per the regulations of the Department of Education and Science.

IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING SUPPORT/ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

This school's learning support/additional educational needs policy will describe its arrangements for identifying students additional needs. We hope to identify as soon as possible difficulties that can be supported, or additional needs that require adapted intervention. All information of students with additional needs will be recorded and distributed in a confidential manner on VS Ware/ Teacher portal and from the Curriculum Support Coordinator. Students who are identified as having an additional need will also be recorded on the staffroom AEN notice board. Recommendations and/or allowances for each student will be reported in a secure file on the teacher portal.

The identification process will usually involve the following:

Liaison with Primary Schools

Specific section on the admissions/enrolment form

Liaison with parents

Observations by the subject, pastoral care team and guidance counsellor as appropriate.

Formal assessments/testing for all incoming first years.

Individual testing from the AEN Coordinator

Under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, each student assessed as having an additional educational need will require an Individual Learning Plan/student support file.

ASSESSMENTS

The school aspires that students will be assessed as follows:

Standardised diagnostic testing on entry to the school is deemed appropriate.

Assessment through teaching in general subject areas.

Informal in-house assessment.

Follow up assessment and testing

Referral to the National Educational Psychological Service as appropriate.

Parental consent must be sought for psychological assessments as per the NEPS model of service.

Should parents ask for an assessment to be carried out on their child, the school should make the necessary arrangements for such an assessment having due regard to other similar requests being made.

Original records of such assessments shall be maintained in the school as the property of the school and shall not be removed from the school under any circumstances.

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLANS / STUDENT SUPPORT FILES

The Individual Learning Plan is a special programme written by the school so that each child can work at improving their skills and knowledge at their own pace. The additional needs coordinator and other relevant teachers should consult with parents and subject teachers about the Individual Learning Plan that they are developing.

This programme will set learning targets and it is important that they are SMART:

1. a) Specific (that the targets are very precise)
2. b) Measurable (it can be seen if a target has been achieved)
3. c) Agreed by all (parents, student and school)
4. d) Realistic (can be achieved by the student)
5. e) Time related (that the targets will be met in a set time)

The Support Plan should include the following:

1. a) A description of the student's educational needs
2. b) Targets to be achieved in a given time
3. c) The educational provision (staff involved, frequency of support, specific programmes, activities, materials/equipment)
4. d) Help from home – agreed homework, how often, how long.
5. e) Expected input from student
6. f) Any other support needs (e.g. medical or counselling)
7. g) Monitoring and assessment arrangements (how is it checked?)
8. h) Review date and arrangements

Curriculum planning

Learning Support is integrated into the Curriculum, it is flexible and responds to the student's needs. Learning Support takes the form in the following ways:

- Reducing the curriculum for a specific student by one or more subjects
- Withdrawal from class on a carefully timetabled basis, as not to impact on any one subject
- Timetabled classes for students with an Irish exemption.
- Other strategies e.g. team teaching/ theme teaching.

Literacy, Numeracy Social Study Support Classes

Small group Literacy, Numeracy and Social Study groups for students who need additional support in these areas. The groups are usually formed based on information from primary school, information from school reports and class teachers. These classes are flexible and students may move in and out of groups on a needs basis. Team teaching is used when appropriate.

Irish Exemptions

The Learning Support Department process Irish exemptions in accordance to the rules set down by the DES. In order to gain an Irish exemption due to a learning difficulty, a student must be below the 10th percentile in literacy. The school will provide an extra learning support class at this time to support students in literacy, numeracy and social skills. Parents or

Guardians must make this decision and apply in writing to the Principal to request the exemption for their child.

Teaching of Students

Students who gain access to Learning Support/ Resource are taught individually, in a team teaching capacity or in small groups. There is a general guide of the areas that need to be addressed within the classes. However, informal assessments will determine the final plan for a certain group or individual.

Consultative role

The Curriculum Support Department will liaise with the following:

Parents

Teachers

School Management

Care Team

DES

NEPS

NRB

Visiting teacher service

Speech and Language Therapist

Guidance Counsellor

Student Records

The AEN Department will keep a file on each student for the duration of their time in school. The record includes any assessments done in school, psychological report, Irish exemption, profile and programme for learning, applications for reasonable accommodations or assistive technology. These documents are kept in a locked cabinet in the principal's office.

Sharing of Information with Staff

Information that is important for relevant staff is shared in a way that protects the student.

- Class teachers may call into the Curriculum Support Classroom to discuss or view files with the AEN team.
- Notes relating to in-coming 1st years from their primary school teachers are available to view in the CS room/ Principal's office but they cannot be removed.
- Relevant teachers are emailed a list of recommendations about 1st year students based on psychological reports.
- Uploaded recommendations are recoded on the secure teacher portal.
- Information about the different additional needs in general are shared by the AEN team through Google Docs, the teacher portal and can be found on the Additional Needs Notice board in the staffroom.

Review and Evaluation

The Curriculum Department evaluates its work by:

- Assessments given by Curriculum Coordinator to evaluate progress
- Working in collaboration with subject teachers
- Consultation with student and parents
- Looking at performance in school based examinations
- Regular department meetings

Application to the DES

The Learning Support/Resource Department applies to the DES for the following:

- Resource hours for Individual hours
- Exemptions in Irish
- Reasonable Accommodations in accordance with the guidelines set down by the Examination Commission
- Assistive Technology
- Continued professional development

Procedure followed when applying for reasonable accommodations:

The Learning Support Department follow the guideline set down by the State Examination Commission when making application for reasonable accommodations.

The procedure is as follows for students with a specific learning difficulty:

- Identify students who may need reasonable accommodations for Junior and Leaving Certificate from psychological reports and formal tests used in the school.
- Using WRAT IV test students with literacy difficulties on reading and spelling.
- If a student is below a standard score of 70 in reading and/or spelling they are eligible.
- If a student has a standard score of between 71- 85 in reading and/or spelling further investigation is needed.
- Therefore, the curriculum support teacher must obtain samples of work from the student and do an error analysis of their work. If the student has between 15- 20% errors in spelling they are eligible for a spelling and grammar wavier.
- Also, the curriculum support teacher may use previous school assessments, psychological reports and their own professional judgement in cases where reading and/or spelling is inconsistent.
- When a student is considered eligible for reasonable accommodations, a correct form is filled out and a signature from parents/ guardians must be sought.

- In cases where students don't qualify for reasonable accommodations, parents are notified.

RESOURCES

Application for Additional Resources:

The school is committed to the provision of human, physical and practical resources in a fair, equitable, open and transparent manner.

The school will make application to the Department of Education and Science for additional resources on behalf of individual students on receipt of the following:

1. a) Duly completed forms as specified by the Department of Education and Science.
2. b) Current psychological reports, as appropriate.
3. c) Other relevant support documentation, as appropriate.

Once the Department of Education and Science hands down its decision to the school this will be communicated to the student and parents.

The school may wish to appeal Department of Education and Science decisions.

Should a student in receipt of resource support leave the school for whatever reason, the Principal should notify the Department of Education and Science with immediate effect and teaching resources applicable to said student should be discontinued.

Deployment of Resources

11.2.1 The school, through allocation of resources, seeks to empower staff to meet the needs of students. It expects resources to be deployed in a way that best promotes the students' learning and development, with full accountability for all resources allocated. This includes the deployment of resources for the specific purpose for which they are intended. Teachers will be requested to make regular reports on the deployment of resources.

PROVISION

The school aspires to keep under review the suitability of its learning environment and to identify deficiencies that impede the learning and development of its students and to remedy these deficiencies in as far as is practicable.

The school also aspires to have in place:

1. a) Policies for learning support/additional needs, including curriculum delivery, behaviour management, the assessment and monitoring of student's progress and attendance, as well as systems for monitoring and evaluating provision for learning support/additional educational needs.
2. b) Systems for detecting learning support/additional educational needs and for communicating them to all staff who will be in contact with the student.
3. c) Timetabling provision for Learning Support teachers in compliance with the terms of CL 33/79
4. d) Appropriate pro-rata time allocations in respect of meetings, assessments and coordination for the additional Needs Coordinator and resource teachers, as appropriate.
5. e) A Pastoral Care system that offers support to students.
6. f) Access for students with learning support/additional educational needs to appropriate facilities.
7. g) A counselling service for students.
8. h) Access to appropriate information technology and other appropriate equipment and aids.
9. i) Individualised Education Plans, as appropriate.
10. j) Systems offering access to external support agencies.
11. k) A system for ensuring that all additional resources are used for the specified target group and are not subsumed into the general teacher allocation for the school.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

The school encourages teachers and parents to work in close partnership with each other in the identification of need, the setting of educational targets and working with the child.

The school affirms that parents of students with additional educational needs will be informed of such needs and how they are being met. In addition, parents must be involved in all significant decisions relating to their child's education.

The school aspires to provide frequent opportunities for parents to discuss progress and to express their views about the way in which their child's needs should be met.

Wherever possible, students will be included in discussion and decision making regarding identification, target setting and progress.

The school places great emphasis on transparency in all matters relating to the student's learning support/additional educational needs. Therefore, parents will have access, in the prescribed manner, to all records regarding their child.

EXCEPTIONALLY ABLE STUDENTS

The school accepts that exceptionally able students have particular needs. Therefore, we aspire to put in place accurate assessment systems, flexible planning and provision, responsive pastoral supports and monitoring strategies.

While many very able students stand out because of their all-round ability and performance in examinations some may be passed over.

The school aspires to have adequate identification structures in place to meet this challenge.

Identification of students with high ability comes from a successful amalgamation of evidence from a variety of sources including assessments and diagnostic tests, observations and class work.

Exceptionally able students have additional needs because regular schoolwork may not provide sufficient challenge they may experience boredom, which can lead to frustration at school. In addition, many may feel isolated and uncomfortable with their ability. This can lead to them underachieving in school in an effort to conform. There are several approaches that can be of help and sometimes a combination of all of these may be needed.

1. a) Differentiation: keep the student with their usual age group, but provide different material
2. b) Open ended project work.
3. c) Special classes: Have special classes available for a group of high ability students, perhaps on a weekly basis.
4. d) Enrichment Activities: Providing access to activities such as lunchtime clubs e.g. chess, astronomy, quizzes, debates, music groups, drama. Particularly try to facilitate students meeting others with similar interests even if they are in different year groups.
5. e) Avoid giving the student repetitious work: Most high ability students do not need a high level of repetitive work. Before introducing a new topic, check if anyone in the

group already knows the area. If you can establish that a student understands fully the new concept, have backup material ready for them. If students have some ongoing project work, it can be helpful to let them work on that while the rest of the class is carrying out repeated examples.

ACCESS FOR PERSONS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES:

The school aspires to promote understanding of the needs of people with physical disabilities.

The school aspires to offer equality of opportunity to students with physical disability and to ensure this by constantly reviewing and revising procedures, which may have the effect of being discriminatory.

The school is committed to educating all students in such a way that discriminatory behaviour of any kind is addressed.

The school is committed to providing for the particular needs of the physically disabled. This must be done in consideration of the availability of essential resources in this area.

The school seeks, through the Department of Education and Science, to have its sites adapted to ensure total accessibility for the physically disabled.

School management is required to recognise the needs of the physically disabled, when designing curricula and drafting timetables.

The school will support teachers who engage in professional development courses specifically aimed at improving the service they can offer to the physically disabled e.g. Braille etc.

DISCRIMINATION ON GROUNDS OF DISABILITY

The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004 set out certain activities that do not constitute discrimination. The following relate to discrimination on the grounds of disability:

Schools may make different arrangements for sport for children on the basis of age, gender or disability if these are reasonably necessary.

Schools will not be considered to discriminate against a student with a disability if compliance with the provisions of the legislation would have a seriously detrimental effect on or make impossible the provision of services to other students.

In certain circumstances, discrimination on the grounds of disability can occur if there is a failure to do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability. If a person with a disability cannot avail of a service without the provision of special treatment or facilities then the service provider may be required to provide such special arrangements if there is only a nominal cost involved.

The Act includes a provision that clarifies that the nominal cost issue does not prejudice or dilute the various provisions in the Education Act, 1998, in relation to children with a disability. It should be noted that these provisions all relate to the use of public funds. This means that private schools are only obliged to make special provision for children with disabilities if there is only a nominal cost involved.

SUPPORT FOR STAFF

Columba College is committed to the provision of support for staff in relation to on-going in-service training.

THE SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICE (SESS)

In September 2003, the Department established the Special Education Support Service (SESS) to manage, co-ordinate and develop a range of supports in response to the identified training needs of teachers. The SESS, which is hosted in Laois Education Centre, provides a nationwide service to teachers and special needs assistants. As part of its response to the growing demand from teachers for support and training, the SESS has developed teams of trainers to deliver training in four specific areas: Autism, Challenging Behaviour, Dyslexia and Inclusion. This training will be delivered locally through the Education Centre network. The school welcomes this initiative and affirms its support for it. This service can be accessed at www.sess.ie

CURRICULUM ACCESS SUPPORT TEAM

The school aspires to organise a Curriculum Support Teachers' Network for teachers which will have following objectives:

To improve morale and avoid isolation through a structured system of support.

To exchange ideas and information about developments and resources relevant to learning support/additional educational needs.

To share resources, where practicable.

To identify and meet in-service needs.

To promote membership of ILSA, IATSE and other relevant organisations and to encourage attendance at courses, seminars and conferences.

To create links with other associations such as DAI etc.

To set guidelines for best practice.

To monitor the School's Policy in the area of learning support/additional educational needs.

Co-ordinator

Ms Murphy

Teachers

Staff of Columba College

Guidance

Ms Kiernan

Care team

Ms Coady

Ms Smith

Ms Murphy

Ms Kiernan

Mr Brady

Ms Nulty

Other teachers as needed based on the student/ situation

Roles within Curriculum Support

Duties include but are not limited to:

- Teaching Learning Support/ Resource/ EAL classes.
- Preparing and submitting applications to the DES.
- Scheduling AEN class timetables.
- Organising and researching specific interventions for students.
- Meeting with parents and subject teachers etc.
- Applying for SNA Support for students.
- Circulating information to staff.
- Organising special centres for mocks and state exams.
- Organising and filing documents in relation to students with an AEN.
- Implementing IEPS/ strengths & needs profiles.
- Carrying out assessments (WRAT IV for RACE, CAT4 for incoming 1st years, NGRT)
- Overseeing students on progress reports.
- DARE/ RACE applications.

Role of SNAs

Duties include but are not limited to:

- Acting as reader/ scribe etc. for students during mocks/ state exams.
- Overseeing students on daily report.
- Helping designated students with lockers in the morning.
- Assisting individual students who have been assigned to that SNA.
- Assisting Curriculum Support/ Resource teachers as needed.
- Supervise at break-times.
- Checking in and reporting on students who may require extra resources going forward.
- Liaising with students on a daily basis on matters other than their education.

Guidance

The Guidance Counsellor offers a range of learning experiences and interventions, which are designed to assist students in making decisions about their lives, particularly in relation to their personal, social, educational and vocational development.

Counselling is an integral part of the school guidance programme. It is offered to students on an individual or group basis as part of a developmental learning process and at moments of personal crisis or difficulty. The Guidance Counsellor is an advocate for students within the school and if necessary, may refer the student to external professionals for further support.

Career Guidance is an on-going process which commences when students enter the school and continues throughout their secondary school education. From Transition year onwards, students explore their interests, attitudes and personal talents through weekly career classes' and one to one vocational meetings. They are provided with the knowledge, skills and resources needed to investigate future study and carer options, such as subject choice, 3rd level research, apprenticeships, employment, and the CAO, PLC and UCAS application processes. Students will be guided towards making informed, realistic choices about their future plans after the Leaving Certificate.

Students with an additional need often have personal and emotional issues so linking in with Guidance is very important to the AEN Department.

Care Team

Columba College Care Team provide support to students who are struggling with personal issues, and are considered vulnerable or at risk. The team meets regularly to provide support mechanisms and strategies for the students concerned. The Care Team is crucial in relation to any bullying incidents in the College. On occasion, where appropriate, the team in conjunction with parents/ guardians may call on the support of, or make referrals to outside statutory or voluntary agencies. Students with additional needs can sometimes be very vulnerable and are more likely to be bullied or to have anxiety issues etc. so the Care Team is very important to the AEN Department.

REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The Curriculum Support Team shall review this policy regularly.

The following criteria shall be considered essential for the successful implementation of the policy:

The acceptance by the entire school community of the aims, objectives and principles as outlined in the policy.

The fulfilment of roles and responsibilities, as outlined in the policy.

Compliance with identification, inclusion and provision measures as set out in the policy.

The completion of an annual report form on learning support/special educational needs provision as appropriate.

SUMMARY

This policy is based on the following key principles:

All students with additional needs will be identified as early as possible.

There will be positive partnership with parents with regard to identification of and provision for students with additional needs.

There will be a whole school approach to issues of identification and provision in this school.

The school will encourage inclusive education for students with additional needs.

There will be close co-operation with all agencies to ensure a multiagency approach to support.

There will be targeted programmes of professional training and development.

There will be a support network for teachers working in this area.

There will be systems in place for the resourcing of staff in relation to students with additional needs within a realistic understanding of resource availability from the Department of Education and Skills.

There will be regular review of policy and practice in relation to all issues pertaining to additional needs in the school.

Planning for the Future

The AEN team hope to have more IEPs for students up and running in the coming years. We hope to be able to timetable things in a more suitable way so that we have the time to do this.

We hope to meet with management to discuss our timetabling needs for the coming year.

We hope to have all members scheduled for a meeting at the same time next week.

It is hoped that we continue to use VS Ware for the sharing of information relating to student's additional needs in the future.

As we did this year, to have CAT4, Reading Ages, WRAT 4 spelling and Maths attainment results for all 1st year students going forward.

Date Ratified:

Date of Review