



WHOLE SCHOOL POLICY ON
SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH
ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Mercy Secondary School

Whole School Policy on Supporting Students

with

Additional Educational Needs

Section 1: Inclusion in Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore

1.1 Mission Statement

Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore is inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley and is a learning community which aims for excellence, while nurturing a living relationship with Christ through compassion for all within the trusteeship of CEIST, Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust.

1.2 Inclusion

It is the policy of the school that the term "all students" in the mission statement includes students with special educational needs and/or additional needs. The principle aim of this policy document is to enable these students to access, participate in and benefit from the education normally provided in the school to the fullest extent possible and to do so alongside students who do not have such difficulties, unless the nature or degree of these needs of the student is such that to do so would be inconsistent with:

- the best interests of the student as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under the EPSEN Act (2004)
- the effective provision of education for students with whom the student is to be educated.

1.3 AIMS:

Every student should be taught a curriculum that is appropriate to his/her developmental level"

(Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools, 2017)

This policy applies to all students attending Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore

including those with special educational needs and/or additional needs. The aims of this Whole School Inclusion Policy are as follows:

- "To ensure that students have a positive sense of themselves as learners and a strong sense of their own efficacy and capacity to improve" (NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines, 2017)
- To promote inclusivity through equality of access and participation in the school. To promote the emotional, social, and physical well-being of students by developing self-esteem, personal responsibility and the ability to live and work with others
- To provide a level and quality of education appropriate to the needs and abilities of all students in the school
- To ensure that all students leave school with the life skills that they will need to participate in society, and to live independent and fulfilled lives
- To enable all students to belong to an educational community without prejudice and within which individual difference is celebrated
- To develop the necessary structures and staff expertise in supporting students with special educational needs and/or additional needs.

1.4 Legal Framework

This policy is drafted in the context of specific provisions and definitions with regard to children with special educational needs and the statutory requirements placed on the school and the Board of Management by the following acts:

The Education Act 1998

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000

The Equal Status Act 2000

The Equality Act 2004

The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN Act) 2004

The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998, and 2003)

The Freedom of Education Acts (1997 and 2003)
The European Union General Data Protection Regulation 2016
The Framework for Junior Cycle 2015
NCCA Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines 2017
Circular 0014/2017
Circular 0015/2017

1.5 Access

The school provides for students with a wide range of abilities and/or additional needs, and places for students with or without a special educational need are allocated in line with the whole school admissions policy.

Section 2: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs

2.1 Revised Special Education Teaching Allocation

The Department of Education provides special education teaching supports directly to schools based on their educational profiles.

This allocation is being made to allow schools to provide special education teaching support for all students who require such support in their schools.

The school will deploy resources based on each students' individual learning needs without the requirement for a diagnosis of a disability.

Special education teaching supports provided to schools should be used solely for the support of students with identified special educational needs, including those students for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL).

Students with the greatest levels of need should have access to the greatest level of support, and whenever possible, these students should be supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.

The decision of how the teaching resources are distributed within the school is decided on by the Senior Leadership Team.

2.2 Model of Special Education Teaching Support

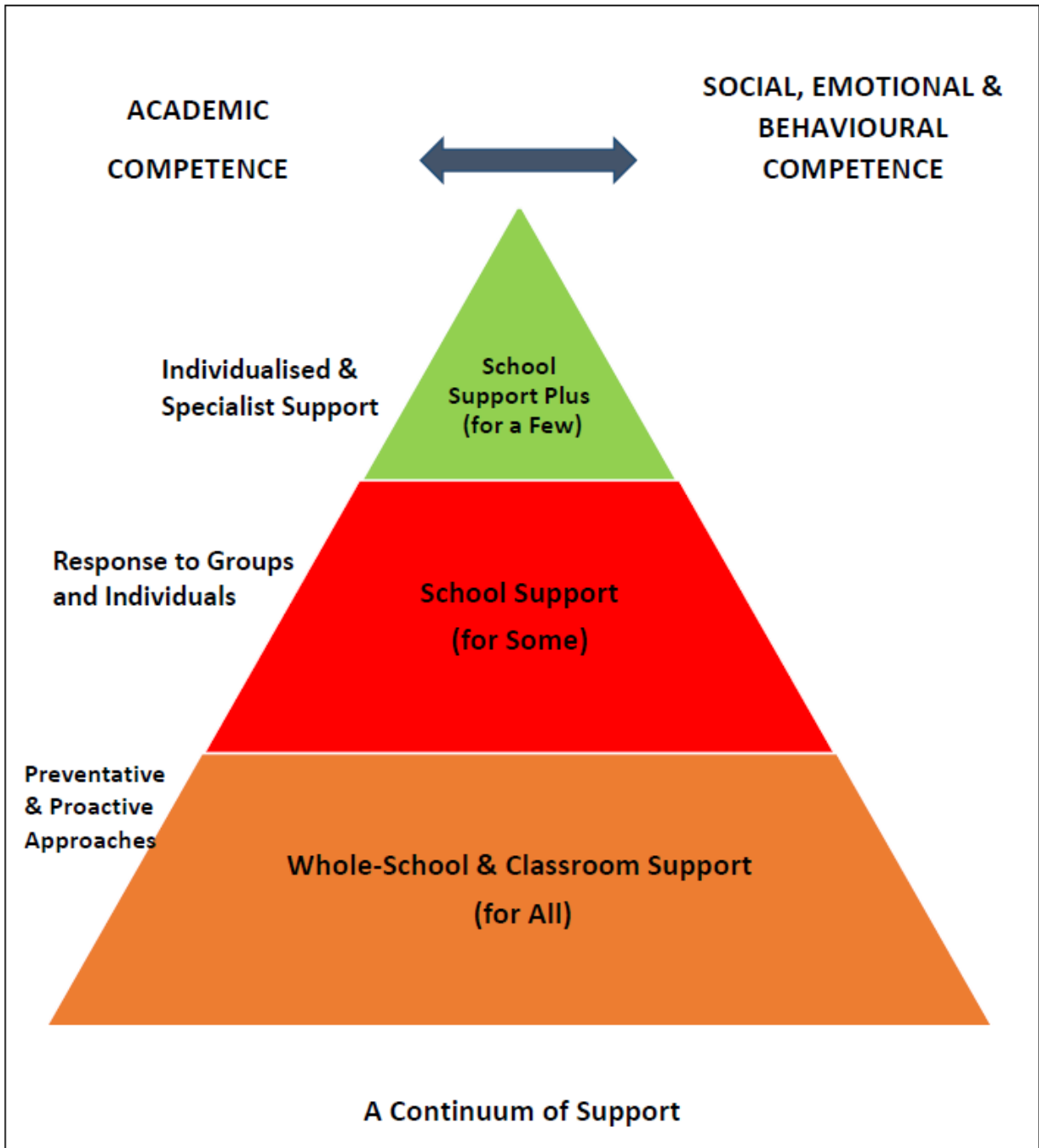
Special Education Teaching Support in Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore is organised in line with the NEPS 'A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools' (DES, 2007). According to this model support is organised at three different levels:

- Support for ALL students
- School Support (for some students)
- School Support Plus (for a few students)

The Department has set out the Continuum of Support framework to assist schools in identifying and responding to students' needs.

This 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.



2.3 Support for All Students

This is a whole-school level of support available to every student. Intervention at the whole school level is intended to be proactive. It aims to support and promote positive student behaviour and learning for all. An integral part of this level of support is effective whole school screening for learning and behavioural needs, so that there is early identification of 'at risk' students. Supports at this level in Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore include:

Literacy Support and Interventions

- Access for all first year students to "Literacy", "Numeracy" and "Transition and Transfer" programmes - promoting reading & writing, practical mathematical operations and coping skills
- Drop Everything & Read, & Literacy promotion events such as Word of the Week, and Book Clubs
- Paired reading programmes
- Pre and post screening of reading comprehension skills for all first year students at start and end of First Year

DEIS and the Vocabulary Gap

Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and particularly vocabulary difficulties have been identified as being more prevalent in populations of adolescents from areas of socioeconomic disadvantage (Spencer, Clegg & Stackhouse, 2012) and as having a significant impact on attainment in schools (Spencer, Clegg & stackhouse, *unpublished*).

Vocabulary learning has been identified as one of the most significant problems experienced by students with Speech, language and communication needs (Bishop, 1997; Gathercole, 1993; Sim, 1998). Knowledge of vocabulary is a strong predictor of academic achievement and has an important role to play in literacy and cognitive development (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997)

Development of vocabulary skills is inherent to both oral and written language development. Students aged 12-17 years are exposed to 10,000 new words from textbooks alone over their years at post-primary school (Clark, 2003)

With this in mind we deliver the **Vocabulary Enrichment Programme** to all first year students.

Numeracy Support and Interventions

- Access for all first year students to "Numeracy" programme - promoting practical mathematical operations
- Pre and post screening of numeracy skills for all first year students at start and end of First Year
- Numeracy Promotions such as Numeracy Ninja and Maths Eyes

Curricular Support and Interventions

- Differentiated teaching techniques and learning activities - School wide promotion of Assessment for Learning (AfL) and active teaching methodologies
- Co-Operative teaching - in-class support allocated to classes to support all students in that subject where necessary
- Assessment and monitoring of student progress at Christmas and Summer exams
- Communication & Collaboration with teaching staff regarding concerns about students' behaviour and learning
- Collection and analysis of school wide screening data and transfer information, attendance and behavioural records by SEN co-ordinator.

Social, Emotional and Behavioural Support and Interventions

- Access for all first year students to "Transition and Transfer" programme
- School wide system of promoting and reinforcing positive behaviour, e.g Green sheets, display of work on noticeboard, announcement to whole school of an individual prize or success, JCSP awards, certs, initiatives etc.
- School Awards Day - promotion of academic achievement and participation of all students in the school.
- 'Friends for Life' - an emotional resilience and promotion of wellbeing programme. JCSP certification
- Rainbow programme offered to student groups (when and if available again)
- Student Support Team - meeting once a week to discuss the support needs of students
- Mentor programme -
- a "buddy" system whereby fifth year students are trained to support first year students in their transition to post primary school
- A prefect system whereby sixth year students support students in their first year in the school
- Student Council - represents the views of all students in the school.
- Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) - a social inclusion programme that is aimed at students who are identified as being at risk of being socially or academically isolated or at risk of early school leaving before the Junior Cycle Programme has been completed.
- Transition Year and Leaving Cert Applied (LCA) at Senior Cycle.
- School Completion Programme (SCP)

2.4 School Support - Some

Support at this level is targeted at those students (approximately 10%-20% of the school population) who do not respond to the whole-school strategies sufficiently and who need more support. A range of approaches and interventions may be used, some of which may be short-term, while others may be longer term. These may include:

- A process of consultation and planned intervention with parents/guardians
- Student Support Plans are devised for the individual or group.
- Small group or individualised tuition.
- Peer mentoring
- Inclusion in social skills groups
- Behaviour reward and consequences system
- Subject goals
- Co-teaching supports may be put in place where there is an identified need.

Support at this level in Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore may include:

Literacy and Numeracy Support and Interventions

- Access to small group Literacy and / or Numeracy support.

Curricular Support and Interventions

- Academic monitoring
- First Year Homework Support and Club for First Year students
- Additional support at Irish or Modern Language class times for students with Irish

Exemptions where possible

- Reduced curriculum in second year and communication with teaching staff about the learning needs of student.
- Student may be involved in an attendance monitoring programme with others.
- Participation in the Trinity Access Programme (TAP) and Bridge 21 project.
- Participation in College For Every Student (CFES) leadership skills programme

Social, Emotional and Behavioural Support and Interventions

- Transfer to Second Level support programme organised by School Completion Programme.
- Access to small group Emotional and Behavioural/ Social Skills support programme.
- Liaising with student's parents/guardians to discuss progress or organise an educational assessment or CAMHS referral if necessary
- Participation in small group Rainbows programme

2.5 School Support Plus - FEW

These students typically about 2%-5% of the school population have significant difficulties and may require intensive individualised interventions. Interventions at this stage are likely to include:

- Student Support Plan which will include a classroom support plan, which will be implemented by classroom teachers
- Involvement of additional professional input such as psychologists, speech and language therapists, etc.
- Specialist interventions

Support at this level in Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore may include:

- SNA Support
- Liaising with specialist team e.g. Visiting Teacher for Visually Impaired, Speech Therapists, Social Workers, or CAMHS teams.
- Work with NBSS/NEPS on an Behaviour Support Plan
- Student may work with SEN teacher on a one to one and a group basis
- Individualised planning
- Reduced curriculum
- One to one work with member of the School Completion Programme team.

- Art Therapy
- Counselling service

2.6 Identification of students with Special Educational Needs

- **Information Gathering** -Information on incoming first years is obtained directly from the parents'/guardians' interviews with the Home School Liaison Teacher or from the feeder primary schools. This information is treated sensitively and with the strictest confidence, however relevant information about special educational/additional needs which are significant to their ability to access the school curriculum is passed on to relevant staff members and is recorded in a special needs register in the school. Parents/guardians are requested to state on the school application form if their child has been assessed with a learning/emotional difficulty or has received Learning Support/Resource hours at primary level. They are requested to pass it on to the school with the application form.
- Intake screening (CAT4)
- Collection of information from primary schools, including Student Passport, Interview with Primary school teachers
- Teacher referral
- Student referral
- Parental referral
- Student Support Team referral
- Consultation with outside agencies (School Completion Programme, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)
- Standardised tests of literacy/numeracy (NGRT)
- Parental/Guardian consultation (Pre-transition meetings)
- Diagnostic Assessments in Literacy/Numeracy
- Psychoeducational Reports
- Medical Reports

Guidelines for the Identification and Prioritisation of students for Additional Support

In line with Circular 0014/2017 students are prioritised for support on the following criteria:

- Students performing below the 10th percentile in standardised tests in numeracy or literacy
- Students who previously received supplementary teaching from a resource or learning support teacher in Primary School and/or who continue to experience significant difficulties
- Students who are identified as having significant needs on the basis of school based assessment of attainment including ongoing monitoring of academic performance in House Examinations and behavioural, social and emotional functioning
- Students who present with mild, or short-term, educational needs, including those with speech and language difficulties, organisational, co-ordination or attention control difficulties
- Students who present with additional needs which are set out in professional reports, for example those with Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, etc.) and General Learning Difficulties (Mild, Borderline, Moderate, Severe)
- Students with significant and complex Special Educational Needs, for example significant behavioural, emotional, physical and sensory needs (E.g. Autistic Spectrum Disorders)
- Students who have additional literacy or language learning needs, including those students who need English Additional Language Support (EAL)

2.7 The Role and Responsibilities of the Subject Teacher

"The classroom teacher is responsible for educating all students in his or 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." (Circular 0014/2017)

It is important to emphasise that all teachers in the school have students with special educational needs in their classrooms and that the ordinary classroom is where education is normally provided.

Teachers have a key role in the successful inclusion of students with special educational needs. It is the teacher's responsibility to access all information that is likely to be relevant to teaching or supervising a student with a special educational need, to the greatest extent possible.

Teaching is differentiated, in so far as possible, in order to meet individual needs within the classroom. Differentiated instruction refers to the wide range of strategies, techniques and approaches that are used to support student learning and to help every student to realise her potential. Teachers can collaborate with the SENCO (Special Education Needs Co-ordinator) and SEN Team in order to plan for appropriate differentiation.

Teachers also play a key role in the identification and referral of students to the SEN Department. They may be concerned about a student's academic progress, communication skills, or behaviour within a class, and as such may make a referral on this basis. The SEN Department will then begin a screening process, with the assistance of the Guidance Department and Student Support Team in order to identify the particular needs of the student.

Teachers in the school are encouraged and supported in attending special education training courses and in-service courses, etc, in order to improve the education provided to students with special needs and to all students.

2.8 Role of Students

As well as formal identification procedures, there is also a process in place whereby students can self-refer to the SEN Department through their tutor if they are having difficulties in their subjects. The student's view of their strengths and weaknesses are taken into consideration in the development of their Student Support Plan. Students are consulted regarding their support provision before the timetable is finalised and the support provision will only commence with parental/guardian and student consent.

It is important to note; that students play a key role in their own learning progress. In order for students to benefit most from additional supports they must engage fully with the learning process and the teacher. Students can also be involved in setting their own targets, providing information about learning style, skills and possible interventions and monitoring progress.

Additional supports may be removed from those students who continuously refuse to engage with the learning process and the teacher, and the resources will be redistributed to other students with support needs.

Students also have a key role in supporting each other's learning in the classroom directly by peer support and also outside the classroom in scheduled peer support activities such as TY paired reading, Literacy Drive, Vocabulary Enrichment programme and Maths Eyes.

2.9 Duration

The provision of Learning Support is primarily targeted at students from first to third year if they require such support. It is school policy to review students with additional support needs at the end of each academic year. Support at Senior cycle includes subject support through team teaching, and the provision of additional classes where resources are available and services provided by TAP/CFES/TA21/NCAD/TUD with the particular focus on our Exceptionally Able Learners

2.10 Assessment

Name of Test	Target Group	Purpose of Test	When
CAT 4	Incoming 1st Years	Testing ability	Feb pre transfer
PTM (Progress Testing in Maths)	First Years	Attainment in Numeracy	September
NGRT	First Year	Attainment in literacy	September
PTM	Second Year	Attainment in Numeracy	May of Second Yr
NGRT	Second Year	Attainment in Literacy	May of Second Yr
CAT 4	Transition Year	Ability testing	May of TY
RACE	3rd and LCE/A	Attainment in reading and spelling	October/December of the academic year
Pre NEPS	Individual Students	Further testing	During the Year

Assessment			
DRA (Diagnostic Reading Assessment)	Individual Students	To screen for dyslexia	During the Year

Ability: The entrance assessments for incoming first years aims to establish their strengths and difficulties in the areas of Verbal, non verbal, quantitative and spatial ability. The assessment test used is the CAT4 Digital Edition. It is school policy that results of entrance assessments are not given back to primary schools. Parents/Guardians requesting this information are encouraged to make an individual appointment with the SEN Team to discuss the student's results. In order to safeguard the interests of the students it is school policy that results are not given to parents/guardians over the phone or without proper consultation with the SEN Team

Attainment: In September all first years are given a short standardised mathematical (PTM) and reading test (New Group Reading Test) to establish the group profile. Interventions are decided upon based on this group profile.. .

The students are re-tested at that end of 2nd year to track progression of attainment and also to help identify students who will be priority for RACE testing in 3rd year. The results of the attainment tests are shared with relevant teachers to inform planning and classroom practice.

The Data gathered between Ability and attainment assessments are collated and are used as a tool to inform SEN team and senior Management of the specific needs of the group which may need particular whole class / group / individual interventions.

As part of our assessment procedures, we can use results of the data gathered along side subject teacher reports and observations to Identify any student who may be in need of a NEPS assessment. Once a student has been identified as priority for NEPS assessment it is the duty of the SEN team to guide this assessment through formal and informal testing and observations in areas of Language and communication skills, reading - fluency & comprehension, writing abilities social and personal skills, behavioural screening, numerical skills and if necessary motor development.

This may include the use of:

- My thoughts about school checklist
- Learning environment checklists
- Subject teacher surveys

- Aston index vocabulary scale - analysis of skills
- DRA
- Running records
- Writing behaviours checklists
- Social literacy skills
- WRAT 4 - single word reading and Spelling
- Social Numeracy checklists
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2.11 Assessments carried out by the SEN Team

It may be necessary to conduct further diagnostic testing for students attending learning support e.g. formal tests of reading, spelling abilities. Teachers also carry out their own informal and formal assessments of students to identify and understand their needs more accurately.

2.12 Individualised Planning

A Student Support Plan (SSP) is a written plan that guides a student's learning and progress. This plan states the nature of the student's learning support needs. It then sets out the learning goals to be achieved by a student over a certain time period and it lists the teaching strategies, resources and supports that are needed to help a student to reach these goals. It should be developed and reviewed by teachers in conjunction with parents/guardians, students and where necessary, with others involved in the student's learning.

The SSP states goals relating to the overall development of the student. It records that which is additional to, or different from, the differentiated curriculum that is already being taught to all students in the classroom situation. SSPs are not, therefore, a substitute for the curriculum being taught to all students in the school but may complement a student's access to the curriculum.

It is current policy that SSPs are written for students who access the 'Support for Some' under the NEPS continuum of support model. Typically, this includes students availing of one to one support for low incidence special needs.

2.13 Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations (RACE)

The State Examinations Commission (SEC) operates the Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations (RACE) scheme,

The scheme facilitates access to the certificate examinations by candidates who would have difficulty in accessing the examination or communicating what they know to an examiner

because of a **physical, visual, hearing and/or learning difficulty**.

The scheme assists candidates who have special educational needs to demonstrate what they know in certificate examinations, without compromising the integrity of the assessment. These needs may include learning difficulties as well as permanent or temporary physical, visual, hearing, medical, sensory, emotional, behavioural or other conditions.

Examples of exam accommodations may include some the following:

- Use of a word processor
- Use of a recording device
- Access to a scribe Extra time
- Spelling and grammar waiver
- Access to an individual reader
- Access to a Reading assistant
- Use of an exam reading pen
- Use of personal stereos
- Access to a special centre
- Access to modified exams

Key considerations for RACE applications

- RACE applications will be **made** by the SEN department on behalf of candidates whose special needs have already been identified and who have been provided with appropriate learning interventions on an ongoing basis as part of a continuum **of** support in the school.
- RACE applications are made on the basis of the current support needs of the student. Eligibility for reading and writing accommodations are based on:
 1. the results of standardised testing administered by SEN personnel and
 2. evidence of either a reading accuracy error rate of 7% or more on examination papers at the appropriate level or A reading speed of 89 words or less per minute on examination papers at the appropriate level
 3. Evidence of a Spelling/grammar/punctuation error rate of 8% or more in scripts written in the language of the school under examination conditions
- Teachers can refer and gather necessary data by saving samples of work from in house / classroom assessments to support RACE applications also.
- An application to re-activate supports is submitted for the Leaving Certificate

examinations. The supports provided at Junior Cycle will be provided at Leaving Certificate subject to confirmation by the school authority of an identified and continuing need.

- Applications for the Junior Cycle examinations are submitted in third year.
- It is also important to note that an explanatory note will detail how the assessment procedure was altered will appear on the candidate's examination certificate.
- Further information and eligibility criteria are available from: <http://www.examinations.ie>.

Reasonable Accommodations in In-House Christmas/Summer Exams

Every effort is made to provide the necessary supports for students in these exams. However, the support available is contingent on the resources available at the time.

2.14 Exemption from the study of Irish

Certain students with special educational needs may be exempted from the study of Irish. Details are available in the DES Circular 12/96. Only students with officially granted exemptions are allowed to give up Irish in Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore. This is strictly adhered to, regardless of the Irish tuition received at primary level. Students with an Irish exemption can also choose to remain in Irish class and study the language.

2.15 Confidentiality

Access to information

Records kept on all students include: entrance test results, NCCA Primary School Passports, 6th class teacher interview information, medical information and parental reports. The information kept on students attending with additional needs include psychological reports, and any other relevant professional reports.

Psychological Reports

In the interest of security and strict confidentiality these reports are stored in a locked filing cabinet in the SEN Office. It is current policy to transfer the relevant information from the psychological reports to the SSP and store this information on the school's a shared google doc. This information can be accessed by teacher's only, through a password protected google docs. Sensitive information is handled appropriately in consultation with parents'/guardians wishes.

Special Educational Register

A list of all students with psychological report or special needs is stored for teachers on a shared google docs. Those with access to an SNA from the SENO have their name, photo and needs shared on the noticeboard in the staff room.

Section 3: Roles, Responsibilities and Resources

Description of the roles of key personnel with regard to learning support.

3.1 The Principal and Senior Leadership Team

- Allocation of resource hours to teachers, and allocation of resource budget
- Regular scheduled meetings with the SEN Department
- Facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to education of pupils with special educational needs, and ensure that all school staff (class teachers, special education teachers and special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area

3.2 General Responsibilities within the Special Educational Needs Department

- Profiling and assessing of referred students
- Developing SSPs for all students with psychological reports in consultation with parents, student, SEN team and teachers
- Developing Classroom Plans for all SEN students, with or without a report who need classroom interventions / suitable teaching methodologies. The Classroom plans will be shared with all relevant teachers.
- Programming for all students with SEN in terms of long and short term needs :academic, social, behavioural and emotional
- Providing students with cross-curricular support
- Evaluation of SSPs and programmes of work

3.3 The SEN Core Co-ordination Team

Reasonable Accommodations for Examinations and Classrooms

- Organisation of RACE (State and in-house Examinations) consultation with parents and relevant staff members
- Assessment of third year group - Reading assessment followed by a spelling assessment if necessary to aid in the screening process for Reasonable Accommodations.
- Assistive technology applications

- Applications for SNA along with BCN1 form and Personal Pupil Plan which outlines short and long term goals for reaching independence.
- Communicating with SENO in matters regarding the SNA provision and assistive technology and sending on the Leavers Form and Confirmation of Attendance Forms.
- Liaise with outside agencies such as SLT's, OT's, NEPS, Lucena Clinic, CAMHS and the Visiting Teacher Service about the effective provision for students with additional needs.
- Communicate to the SEN team of such correspondence with the above agencies.
- Meet with SNA's to discuss observations and communicate any arising needs of students in their care.
- Develop a timetable for SNA's which works in the best interest of the student and arising needs of the school.
- Co-ordination of Whole school standardised testing.
- Collaboration with NCSE to provide effective intervention strategies for assessed and emerging needs.
- Provide support to teachers who are in need of advice or resources for any student with additional needs.
- Update SEND board with general information on different disabilities, with practical strategies for teaching included.

Provision of Support

- Co-ordination of the allocation of support hours to students
- Organisation of teacher timetables for support classes, or team teaching
- Co-ordination of Irish Exemptions (M10/94)
- JCT Planning and Preparation
- Co-ordination with School Attendance Support personnel (School Refusal, HSCL, SCP, NEWB)
- Co-Ordination of the Literacy & Numeracy Strategy groups in the school.
- Organisation of the July Provision Programme

Identification and Assessment of Need

- Yearly meetings on incoming first years with 6th class and SEN teachers from feeder primary schools
- Collation of psychological reports and documentation on students in a secure and confidential area
- Co-ordination of agreed testing for incoming first years during the Entrance Assessment
- Entrance Exam analysis
- Co-ordination of the purchase of test materials and resources for the SEN team.
- Organisation of private and NEPS assessments for students

- Referrals where appropriate to external support agencies for example Jigsaw. Hessed House, CAMHS
- Review of 1st to 6th year Christmas and summer tests to monitor students most at risk of academic failure. Students of a failure rate of more than four subjects are identified as having potential support needs. Results are given to Tutor and school management

Staff Training and Development

- Dissemination of SEN information to all staff at beginning of school year and regular updates as needs arise
- Register of all students with SEN available to all staff
- Staff induction
- Organisation of staff in services and training in relation to Special Educational Needs
- On-going support and advice to school management, tutors and teachers regarding the progress and difficulties of students with special needs. Attendance at disciplinary meetings or meetings with parents if required

Communication and Advocacy

- Co-ordination of regular SEN team meetings & collaborative work with school management, parents, colleagues about individual special priority cases.
- Co-ordination of contact with school psychologist
- Collaboration with guidance team on the class placements of students in first year, in particular with regard to students with SEN
- Liaison with parents/guardian of incoming first years with special needs and primary schools regards accommodation and support at second level
- Attendance at the weekly Student Support Team meeting
- Referrals from staff, pastoral care team about students and follow up with students and parents/guardians
- Collaboration with HSCL
- Collaboration with School Completion programme team
- Consultation with JCSP co-ordinator on implementation of the JCSP programme
- Attendance at first year parents' night - a short talk and leaflet is given to the parents on the night to outline how Learning Support works in the school
- Regular consultation and collaboration with school management regarding the allocation of hours and resources to the SEN Department

Special Needs Assistants

- Management of SNA provision
- Bi-monthly meetings with the SNA team to discuss and monitor student progress

3.4 The Role of the Class 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. 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 school's NEPS psychologist and the local SENO. 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.

3.5 The Role of the Special Needs Assistant

The following information regarding the role of the SNA is taken from Circular 0030/2014 (https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/c10030_2014.pdf)

- **Background to The SNA Scheme**

The SNA scheme is designed to provide schools with additional adult support staff who can assist children with special educational needs who also have additional and significant care needs. The purpose of the SNA scheme is to provide for the significant additional care needs which some students with special educational needs may have.

SNA support will be provided to post primary schools when required. In general, only students with chronic and serious care needs will be allocated SNA support in post primary schools. It should not be assumed that all children who have special educational needs or who have been diagnosed as having a disability, require access to SNA support.

- **Emphasis on Developing Independent Living Skills**

A key aspiration for students with special educational needs is that they will, on completion of their school-based education, be able to graduate as young independent adults in so far as this is possible. There is a need to balance the support provided in schools with each student's right to acquire personal independence skills. As such, in order to give those students every opportunity possible to develop independent living skills, the assistive SNA support which is given to them should always be at the minimum level required to meet the care needs of the student.

A key factor in the development of these independent living skills will be the effective communication and collaboration between parents/guardians, teachers and the SNA. We aim to foster these relationships and to cultivate the collaborative atmosphere essential for the progress and development of the student.

- **The Role of The SNA**

Their role is not to act as a constant personal assistant to individual children, who need to be able to develop independent living skills and to associate independently with their classmates. Neither is the role of an SNA to act as an alternative teacher for children with special educational need, who are required to be taught by the class teacher with additional support from resource/learning support teachers in schools.

Once allocated to schools SNAs are important and valued members of the school community. An SNA is an important whole school resource, SNAs participate fully in the life of the school and may therefore also assist other children in the school, who from time to time need assistance, or who have intermittent care needs, but who may not have been assessed as requiring SNA support on a permanent basis. SNA duties are assigned at the discretion of the Principal, or another person acting on behalf of the Principal, and/or the Board of Management of a school in accordance with Circular 0071/2011.

- **Level and Duration of SNA Support**

Students will access the support of an SNA based upon their level of need, which can range from a requirement for brief periods during the day to most of the school day in some instances.

In deciding the level and extent of access to SNA support which should be provided to a student, the best interests of the student should be the paramount consideration. As far as practicable, the views of a student capable of forming her own views should be obtained and given due weight, having regard to the age and maturity of the student. The views of the student, where possible, should therefore be taken into account in reviewing the extent of access to SNA support required.

It is neither appropriate nor beneficial for a student to have a permanent allocation of SNA support which would follow them throughout their school career without recourse to a consideration of changing needs. This could impede that student's development of independent living skills, interaction with peers, or stigmatise the student though

association with a permanent allocation of adult support, at a point of their development where this support may no longer be required.

Guidelines for Special Needs Assistants in Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore

1. The Special Needs Assistant is to be known by his/her first name among students and teachers.
2. Confidentiality is required in relation to all matters that arise within the classroom.
3. This also pertains to the whole school environment, with particular reference to students, teachers and parents. Any relevant and specific (local) information the SNA may have can be communicated to the school Principal.
4. The class teacher is responsible for the teaching, direction and management of all activities in the classroom. Any request for information regarding a student's progress or behaviour must be referred to the class teacher.
5. If the student to whom the SNA is assigned does not require assistance at that time, the teacher/Principal will determine what the SNA can help with and show how this is to be done.
6. Judgement of student progress and quality of student work is the sole responsibility of the class teacher, as is the implementation of classroom discipline.
7. The student with special needs should be encouraged to complete tasks independently at all times.
8. The SNA should have access to any relevant staff training and attend that portion of any staff meeting pertaining to his/her role as determined by the Principal.
9. If a SNA has a query or wishes to communicate relevant information and does not wish to do so through the class teacher, s/he can raise this with the Principal.
10. In cases of misbehaviour involving his/her own charges the SNA must inform the class teacher who will then deal with the matter. If the incident occurs outside the classroom and involves another student, s/he may intervene and request the student involved to go to the Principal's office. The matter may be referred to the teacher on duty. All disciplinary sanctions, if deemed necessary, are to be applied by the aforementioned teachers.

3.6 Reading Corner in the Library and Resource Room. The purpose of this is to provide a

place of relaxation, 'chill-out and privacy for our students. We have also purchased a number of sensory and occupational therapy tools and these can be used in this room for students who may have sensory, physical or learning issues.

3.7 School Trips

Teachers will make themselves aware of any special requirements of their students before planning a trip. These requirements may be physical (i.e. physical disabilities, health) or otherwise (e.g. unable to travel unaccompanied on public transport, unfamiliar with the city centre, social anxiety, etc.).

- If there are students in the group who have extra needs it is imperative that these are catered for in the planning of the outing. Please see Teacher's Guidelines below (available in Staffroom).
- If there are students present on the trip with physical disabilities it is necessary to ensure that the destination is suitable for the student's needs. It is not appropriate to exclude any student from an outing due to their additional needs. An SNA will be made available to assist with care needs. Special Needs Assistants are not permitted to replace teachers in this capacity.
- Teachers will ensure that any students with additional needs have the school phone number stored in their phones, as they may need to contact reception if they are lost.

3.8 Parental Engagement

Parental/Guardian engagement is a critical factor in ensuring both the academic success and successful participation in all aspects of school life for all students, but in particular for those students with a Special Educational Need. A key aim of the Special Educational Team is to provide as many opportunities as possible "to engage with parents and to build a collaborative approach to identifying and responding to the needs of students with special educational needs" (DES, 2017). Outlined below are our current practices in the promotion of parental engagement:

Transition to Post Primary

- Enrolment Form (Parents/guardians are asked to inform the school of their daughter's additional support needs prior to enrolment so that provision can be made for them)
- Pre-Transition Meeting (A transfer to second level orientation day is also organised by

the SCP in June before commencement of secondary school)

- A detailed information booklet on Learning Support is available for parents/guardians
- An information night is organised for parents of incoming first years in September

Identification of Needs

- Parents are contacted following the Entrance Examination Screening Test if any concerns are raised by low performance scores (standard scores below 85).
- If a student's needs merit further investigation or referral to outside agencies (educational psychologist, occupational therapist, CAMHS, etc.) parents/guardians are supported and provided with detailed information on possible referral routes.
- Parents are encouraged to contact the SEN Department and the school, if concerns arise at any stage in their daughter's academic journey through Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore.

Provision of Support (Additional Support Needs-Literacy, Numeracy, Curricular Support)

- The SEN Department maintain regular, informal contact with parents regarding the progress of their child. Parents/guardians are encouraged to share any relevant information and to contact the department if they have any concerns regarding their daughter's progress.

Provision of Support (Complex Needs)

The parents/guardians of students with the most complex needs are in regular contact (possibly daily) with members of the SEN Department including the SNAs. The parents/guardians are asked to support and assist the student in her in terms of helping and checking the work at home, to oversee the preparations for school to ensure that the girls are organised, bring the right books, etc. and come to school on time.

Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENO)

Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore is assigned a SENO by the NCSE. SENOs provide a direct service to the parents of children with special educational needs. Each SENO has responsibility for a list of schools (primary, post-primary and special), within the particular are they serve. At present, SENOs are mainly involved in resourcing schools to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and in ensuring that these resources are used efficiently in schools, in accordance with DES policy. A key role of the SENO is to identify the level of resources that may be sanctioned for a school to support a particular student with special educational needs and what kinds of supports the student needs to benefit from school. In doing this, SENOs must take into account professional reports and recommendations in relation to the student. They must also operate within the policies set down on these matters by the Department of Education and Skills. **SENOs have a role in supporting and advising parents**

of children with special educational needs. Contact details are available on the NCSE website (www.ncse.ie), and the SENO can be contacted by e-mail or phone.

Section 4: External Agencies

As the needs of some students span both the health and education services, the SEN Department liaises with the following agencies, as they play an important role in the assessment, diagnosis, intervention and review for students with complex educational needs:

- National Learning Network
- Enable Ireland
- Our Lady's Hospital Crumlin & National Children's Hospital Tallaght
- St. James Hospital
- Mater Hospital
- Tallaght Hospital
- National Rehabilitation Hospital
- Occupational & Speech and Language Therapists.
- NEPS
- Private Educational Psychologists
- Lucena Clinic
- Visiting Teacher service
- NEWB – National Educational Welfare Board
- CAMHS - Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service
- HSE - Social Workers/Case Referrals
- NBSS- National Behaviour Support Service NCSE - National Council for Special Education
- SCP – School Completion Programme
- CORE Youth Club
- Bluebell Youth Club
- KYRB
- Kavanagh House
- Hessed House

4.1 National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

The SEN Department is in regular contact with a range of external bodies such as the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Psychologist whose support is almost exclusively

aimed at students with special needs.

The Psychologist supports these students:

- When the school applies for additional resources for them
- By offering advice to students and to their parents as well as to teachers
- By counselling students
- By supporting and giving guidance on good professional conduct within the Special Education Needs Department
- By carrying out psychological assessments
- Parents/guardian may choose to have their child privately assessed.

Positive Behaviour Strategy

The Positive Behaviour Strategy supports and promotes positive behaviour for learning. It works on three levels. It can be a whole approach, targeted interventions and intensive individualised support.

5.1 Grievance Procedure

Parents/ Students who are concerned and who wish to discuss or make suggestions about any aspect of educational provision should approach the relevant teacher, tutor, year head or a member of the Special Educational Needs Department. If necessary, an issue can be dealt with by the Principal, Deputy Principal or Board of Management.

5.2 Ratification

The Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore Whole School Policy on Supporting students with Additional Educational Needs was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on May 27th 2019.

5.3 Review/Evaluation

A review of this policy will take place on a regular basis and may include feedback from students, staff, parents and representative from the BOM. It is our intention, as part of the submission of the End of Year Report to the Board of Management, to use the self-reflective questionnaire "Better Services, Better Outcomes for Students with Special Educational Needs" (*Guidelines for Post Primary Schools Supporting Students with*

Special Educational Needs, Appendix 6).

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore on:

Signed:

Ms. Etáin O Moore

Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore - May 2019

