Scoil Naomh Mhuire, Staplestown, Co. Kildare

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Scoil Naomh Mhuire

Special Education Needs and Inclusion Policy

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The School Context

Scoil Naomh Mhuire is a co-educational mainstream primary school catering for children from mixed social and cultural backgrounds. It is situated in the village of Staplestown in County Kildare. 100 children currently attend the school (Jan 2022). The school is under the patronage of the Kildare and Leighlin Diocese. There are four mainstream classes in the school at present.

The school's current NCSE allocation of Special Education Teaching is 27.65 hours. This equates to one full time SET post and 2.65 extra hours per week which is shared with Rathcoffey National School. The additional CLASS allocation of 187.5 hours is being filled on the basis of 8.5 hours of additional teaching per week.

The school's current NCSE allocation for Special Needs Assistants is 0.75 post.

1.2 Beliefs and Principals

Scoil Naomh Mhuire aims to promote the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual including a living relationship with God and with other people. We strive to utilise the full school community resources to create a well ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of our pupils are identified and developed (Mission Statement)
To help achieve this ideal, Scoil Naomh Mhuire provides a broad education in line with the curriculum guidelines for Primary Schools, including coherent and practical planning for the inclusion of children with special educational needs, allowing each child to reach the highest level of academic attainment consistent with his or her abilities or talents, so that the school community is enriched by the unique gifts and talents of all its students.
Scoil Naomh Mhuire recognises that the parents/guardians are the primary educators and that it is only through co-operation between them and the school that our ideal can be realised.
This mission statement is fully in keeping with the 1998 Education Act and EPSEN 2004.

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1998 Education Act:
'to make provision for the education of every person in the State, including any person with a disability or who has other special educational needs respect diversity spirit of partnership between schools, patrons, students, parents, teachers and other school staff, the community'
Education for People with Special Education Needs Act (EPSEN 2004)

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

(a) the best interests of the child, or
(b) the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated

1.3 Consultation

This policy was formulated in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

1.4 Rationale

- This policy document aims to outline the school's provision of additional educational support for students with S.E.N.
- It outlines the philosophy that underpins this provision.
- The policy is written in the context of the various pieces of legislation listed below.
- The policy is a working document and will be regularly reviewed.
- The policy is a reflection of our current practice.

1.5 Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all students with S.E.N., including students with exceptional ability, who attend Scoil Naomh Mhuire. It is also intended to serve the school community including B.O.M, the Principal, the teaching and ancillary staff and parents.

1.6 Legal Framework

Scoil Naomh Mhuire. sets out to provide education for all its students, with reference to legislation regarding students with S.E.N. as listed below:

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- The Education Act (1998)
- The Education Welfare Act (2000)
- The Equal Status Act (2000)
- The Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill (2003)
- The Equality Act (2004)
- The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)
- The Freedom of Education Acts (1997 and 2003)
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)

This policy is drafted in the context of:

- DES Circular Letters
- The guidelines published by the NCSE
- The guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process 2006
- The Guidelines on the Continuum of Support for Primary Schools (NEPS).
- The guidelines published by the Special Educational Needs Support Service (SESS)

1.7 Aims of the Policy

The principal aim of Special Education Support Teaching and Whole School Inclusion in Scoil Naomh Mhuire is to provide a positive learning environment, which will foster the academic, social and emotional development of students with learning difficulties and to enable each student to realise their individual potential.

Special Education Teaching Support provision also seeks to:

- Enable pupils of all abilities to avail of and benefit from an appropriate education.
- Provide students with consistent opportunities to experience success.
- Provide supplementary teaching and additional support in literacy and numeracy.
- Involve parents in the support of their child's education.
- Promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of a whole school policy on learning support for pupils.
- Enhance the self-esteem of the learner.

The school hopes to achieve the following by updating the SEN and Inclusion policy:

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- To guide the implementation of the revised model for allocating special education teaching supports.
- To include the most recent best practice in SEN.
- To reflect the most recent recommendations, most particularly the Continuum of Support at Primary Schools (NEPS).
- To outline our whole school approach to teaching/ learning in relation to pupils with SEN.
- To set out procedures for the enrolment of students with SEN in the school.
- To assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child in our school.
- Ensure that students with SEN are educated in an inclusive environment.
- Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the specific needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.
- Ensure that SEN is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.
- Ensure that students with SEN are offered a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Set high standards for students with SEN and provide them with appropriate guidance, encouraging them to achieve to their full potential.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with SEN.
- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at home.
- To outline procedures and practices which will be followed in relation to supporting the learning of pupils with SEN.
- To establish communication structures for the involvement of all the partners in the education of pupils with SEN.

1.8 Whole School Inclusion

Scoil Naomh Mhuire has adopted a whole-school approach to inclusion. A positive ethos and learning environment is encouraged, whereby all students, including those with special educational and additional needs, feel welcome and experience a sense of community and belonging. The school community promotes the active

engagement of each student in their learning and in the life of the school. There is a commitment to developing students' academic, social, emotional and independent living skills coupled with a focus on high aspirations and improving outcomes for all.

2.0 Continuum of Support and Special Educational Needs Provision

2.1 Introduction to the Continuum

Definition: Special Educational Needs
In the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) the term "special educational needs" is defined as

a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition...
(Government of Ireland,2004b, section1)
http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2004/A3004.pdf

Definition: Inclusion
For the purposes of this document, the following definition by the NCSE, has been adopted. Inclusion is defined as a process of:

'addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners through enabling participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and removing barriers to education through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements, to enable each learner to achieve the maximum benefit from his/ her attendance at school'.
Literature Review of the Principles and Practices relating to Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs (NCSE 2010, p.39)
http://www.ncse.ie/uploads/1/NCSE_Inclusion.pdf

2.2 Principals to Guide the Implementation Process

- Resources provided to support pupils with special educational needs are used to facilitate the development of truly inclusive schools.

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- Supports provided to pupils with special educational needs are based on identified needs and are informed by regular reviews of progress (in consultation with parents and pupils) as outlined in the Continuum of Support Guidelines.
- The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all pupils in the classroom, including pupils with special educational needs.
- Special education teaching supports provided to schools are used solely for the support of pupils with identified special educational needs, including those pupils for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL). The special education teaching supports are not used to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio in mainstream classes. Neither are they used to allow any special education teacher sole responsibility for the delivery of any curriculum subject to any particular class.
- **Pupils with the greatest levels of need have access to the greatest level of support, and whenever possible, these pupils are supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.**

2.3 The Continuum of Support

Scoil Naomh Mhuire uses the Continuum of Support framework set out by the Department of Education to assist in identifying and responding to pupils' 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 pupils 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.

The Continuum of Support is a problem-solving model of assessment and intervention that enables the staff in Scoil Naomh Mhuire to gather and analyse data, as well as to plan and review the progress of individual pupils.

Identification of educational needs is central to the model. By using the Continuum of Support framework, the staff in Scoil Naomh Mhuire can identify pupils' educational needs, to include academic, social, and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. The framework emphasises the importance of looking at a pupil's needs in context and

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provides useful resources to support this.
The Continuum of Support enables schools to identify and respond to needs in a flexible way. This means that needs can be responded to as early as possible. Of course, the principle that pupils with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest levels of support is of primary importance. This approach is also supported by information and engagement with external professionals, as required.

2.4 Level 1 Classroom Support

The class teacher considers how to differentiate the learning programme effectively to accommodate the needs of all pupils in their class.
A classroom support plan is developed and / or adjusted over time for those pupils who do not respond appropriately to the differentiated programme.
This is informed by:

- Parental consultation
- Teacher observation records
- Teacher-designed measures /assessments
- Basic needs checklist (Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties Guidelines for Teachers pages 65)
- Learning environment checklist (Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties Guidelines for Teachers pages 66/67)
- Pupil consultation - My Thoughts About School Checklist Literacy and numeracy tests (Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties Guidelines for Teachers pages 96/97)
- Screening tests of language skills

A Classroom Support plan runs for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.

2.5 Level 2 School Support

At this level a Support Plan is devised and informed by:

- Teacher observation records
- Teacher-designed measures / assessments
- Parental consultation
- Pupil interviews
- Learning environment checklist

- Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy
- Formal observation of behaviour including ABC charts, frequency measures (Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties Guidelines for Teachers pages 103/104, 91/92)
- Functional assessment as appropriate, including screening measure for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties

A support plan at this level may detail suitable teaching approaches including team-teaching, small group or individual tuition.
A School Support Plan operates for an agreed period and is subject to review.

2.6 Level 3 School Support Plus

This level of the Continuum is informed by a detailed, systematic approach to information gathering and assessment using a broad range of formal and informal assessment tools, reports from outside professionals (as appropriate) and may include:

- Teacher observation and teacher-designed measures
- Parent consultations
- Pupil interviews
- Functional assessment
- Results/reports of standardised testing such as measures of cognitive ability; social, emotional and behavioural functioning; adaptive functioning etc.

Data generated from this process are then used to plan an appropriate intervention and can serve as a baseline against which to map progress.
A support plan at this level is likely to be more detailed and individualised, and to include longer term planning and consultation.

2.7 Educational Planning and Target Setting

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is enhanced through clear identification processes and careful planning of interventions to address academic and/or personal and social development needs. Identification of needs, planning, target-setting and monitoring of outcomes are essential elements of an integrated and collaborative problem-solving process. In Scoil Naomh Mhuire, the process involves the class teacher, special education teacher, parents, the pupil and relevant professionals. Interventions draw on evidence-informed practice and the

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professional knowledge and experience of teachers. These interventions reflect the priority learning needs of pupils, as well as building on their strengths and interests.

Support plans set out

- the agreed targets
- the resources required
- the strategies for implementation
- time-frame for review

Target-setting

We believe that good target-setting is central to effective teaching and learning for pupils with special education needs. In Scoil Naomh Mhuire targets are expressed in a way that are measurable and observable and reflect the specific special educational needs of individual pupils. The teachers endeavour to set targets which are achievable within a specified time frame and also challenge and build on existing knowledge and address pupils' holistic needs.

Best practice indicates that targets should be **SMART**: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timed. They should be

- few in number
- strengths based
- informed by priority learning needs
- directly linked to suitable interventions
- based on the evidence collected through both formal and informal assessment approaches
- developed collaboratively - teachers in Scoil Naomh Mhuire consult with parents when setting targets and reviewing progress. The views of pupils are also included in this process- where appropriate, through their direct involvement in the discussion or by gathering their views in advance of the review process.

We believe that this collaboration will help ensure that targets are relevant, meaningful, realistic, and that they draw on the strengths and interests of pupils.

2.8 Student Support File

A Student Support File Template has been developed by the staff in Scoil Naomh Mhuire to enable the school to plan interventions and to track a pupil's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates teachers in documenting progress

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and needs over time and assists them in providing an appropriate level of support to pupils, in line with their level of need. Following a period of intervention and review of progress, a decision is made as to the appropriate level of support required by the pupil. This may result in a decision to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or move to a higher or lower level of support.
As special educational needs can vary from mild to transient to significant and enduring educational planning reflect the level of need of the individual pupil. In this regard, the Student Support File facilitates a graduated response across the different levels of the Continuum: Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus. For pupils with significant, enduring and complex needs, collaboration with external professionals, including multi-disciplinary teams, will be engaged to work with the child (for example, occupational therapist, speech and language therapist and psychologist).

3.0 Monitoring and Recording Outcomes for Children with special Educational Needs

This stage of the process is informed by effective measurement of baseline performance, including the use of criterion-referenced tests and other methods of assessment (teacher-designed tests, checklists, samples of work, observation) that allow pupils to demonstrate their progress. This leads to the establishment of specific targets to be achieved within a defined timeframe.
Monitoring outcomes is part of a dynamic process of identification, target-setting, intervention and review, which in turn leads to adjustments in support plans. The Student Support File provides the teachers in Scoil Naomh Mhuire with a useful resource to support and record this process. It includes a Support Review Record to guide teachers when monitoring progress and reviewing outcomes with parents and pupils. We believe that such monitoring of progress, and subsequent adaptation of support plans, are key drivers of effective practice.

3.1 Planning the Allocation of Special Education Teaching Supports

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The Special Education Teacher is deployed to address the needs of pupils with special educational needs in Scoil Naomh Mhuire. An important aspect of the revised allocation model is that additional teaching supports are deployed according to identified needs, rather than being based on a diagnosis of disability. This gives schools greater autonomy and flexibility in how they allocate special education teaching resources. Schools may deploy special education teachers in a variety of ways in order to effectively meet pupils' needs (for example, in-class support, group withdrawal etc).

In Scoil Naomh Mhuire, we believe that effective communication and engagement with parents is critically important in moving towards a needs-based approach to the allocation of additional teaching resources. This is enhanced when we consult parents in relation to their child's needs, support plan, and in termly reviews of progress.

When allocating teaching resources, the management and staff of Scoil Naomh Mhuire are mindful of the benefits of early-intervention and prevention programmes and allocate teaching resources as required, based on identified needs and school context. Scoil Naomh Mhuire aims to strike a balance between in-class support, group and individual support. Importantly, the level and type of support reflects the specific targets of individual pupils as set out in their support plans and also informed by careful monitoring and review of progress. In this way, following a period of intervention, some pupils may no longer require additional teaching supports, some may require the same level, while others may require more intensive supports, thus progressing to the next level.

When deploying teaching resources, Scoil Naomh Mhuire recognises the essential need to maintain time for co-ordinating, planning and reviewing plans and timetables in June and in September. Co-ordination time is, however, kept to a minimum in order to ensure that teaching time is maximised. Additionally, Scoil Naomh Mhuire acknowledges the fact that flexibility in terms of resource allocation is required to allow for emerging needs during the school year.

Planning the allocation of special education teaching supports

In planning the allocation of additional teaching supports, the over-riding principle is that resources are deployed to address the identified needs of pupils. Importantly, those with the highest level of need will have access to the greatest level of support. In addition to literacy and numeracy difficulties, many pupils will have specific

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needs in such areas as oral language, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development and application to learning.

The ***Planning Template (School Support Plan)*** used in Scoil Naomh Mhuire to Guide the Allocation of Additional Teaching Supports for Pupils with Special Educational Needs contains the following areas:

Action 1: Identification of pupils with special educational needs

Review existing information on pupils' needs, using school-based data, and any information from parents and external professionals.

Engage in additional screening and data gathering as required, using informal and formal assessment approaches (for example, teacher observations, information on social and emotional competence, standardised tests, diagnostic tests)

Identify all pupils with special educational needs in the school.

Match their needs to the appropriate level on the Continuum of Support.

Action 2: Setting targets

Based on individual needs, set clear learning targets for each pupil at each level of the Continuum of Support.

Action 3: Planning teaching methods and approaches

Identify the level and type of intervention required to meet targets for each pupil on the Continuum of Support. Teachers should consider methodologies best suited to promoting meaningful inclusion such as differentiation, team-teaching and small group teaching. They should also be mindful that the interventions and supports that they are using are evidence-informed.

Action 4: Organising early- intervention programmes

Based on identified needs, choose evidence-informed early- intervention/prevention programmes to address concerns. Identify time needed and staffing commitment required.

Action 5: Organising and deploying special education teaching resources

Cross-reference the needs of pupils at School Support and School Support Plus levels and consider common needs that can be met by grouping to ensure effective and efficient teaching and learning approaches.

Agree which teacher(s) will cater for these groups/individuals and when and where the teaching will take place. Be mindful of the requirement that pupils with the greatest level of need should receive the greatest level of support from teachers with relevant expertise.

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Action 6: Tracking, recording and reviewing progress
Establish a tracking and recording system, to ensure that the progress of all pupils in meeting their identified targets is monitored:

- At Classroom Support level by class teachers
- At the School Support and School Support Plus levels by class teachers and special education teachers.

4.0 A Whole School Approach to Supporting the Continuum

4.1 Inclusive Education

The NCSE (2011) described inclusion as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners. It involves removing barriers so that each learner will be enabled to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her schooling.
We believe that the whole-school approach to special educational needs provision in Scoil Naomh Mhuire should reflect the Department's commitment to the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools. The whole school approach of Scoil Naomh Mhuire endeavours to foster an inclusive culture which is characterised by:

- A positive ethos and learning environment whereby all pupils, including those with special educational needs, feel welcome and experience a sense of community and belonging
- An emphasis on promoting pupils' participation and active engagement in their learning and in the life of the school
- A commitment to developing pupils' academic, social, emotional and independent living skills
- A focus on high aspirations and on improving outcomes for all pupils

4.2 Whole School Planning

When implementing the revised allocation model to address the needs of pupils with special educational needs, Scoil Naomh Mhuire has adopted a whole-school approach to programme planning and to the implementation of early-intervention

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and prevention programmes. In order to achieve this, Scoil Naomh Mhuire has adapted their existing special educational needs policies to guide the new approach to the allocation of resources.
A whole-school approach involves collaborative action by our school community (in consultation with parents, pupils, SNAs, class teachers, SET, Principal) to improve pupil learning, behaviour and well-being. It encompasses a process of reflection, planning and review of policies and practices, and includes an evaluation of how pupils with special educational needs are identified by the school, the interventions that are put in place to meet their needs and how the outcomes of those interventions are measured and monitored.
The whole-school approach in Scoil Naomh Mhuire addresses the full continuum of needs - ranging from milder and more transient needs to difficulties that are severe and enduring (for example, significant learning, sensory, physical, communication, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties). The school management of Scoil Naomh Mhuire recognises that a small minority of pupils with significant and enduring needs may require a more specialist setting (for example, special unit or special school placement).

4.3 The Role of the Principal

The *Learning Support Guidelines* (2000, p.39) outlined the principal teacher's overall responsibility for the education of children with special educational needs. Under the new allocation model the principal's leadership role is central and includes the following:

- Developing inclusive whole-school policies and monitoring their implementation
- Assigning staff strategically to teaching roles, including special education roles
- Co-ordinating teachers' work to ensure continuity of provision for all pupils
- Ensure that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, pupils and external professionals / agencies
- Ensuring that effective systems are implemented to identify pupils' needs and that progress is monitored methodically
- Facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to education of pupils with special educational needs, and ensure that all

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school staff (class teachers, special education teachers and special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area
- Apply for Supports
- Submit requests to the NCSE

4.4 The Role of the Special Educational Needs Co Ordinator (SENCO)

In conjunction with the Principal the SENCO in Scoil Naomh Mhuire

- Assumes responsibility for the implementation and review of school policies on SEN
- Manage a tracking system at whole-school level to identify and monitor the progress of children with learning difficulties and of high achieving children.
- Maintain the listing and safe storage of psychological reports on children with special needs and also arrange for the confidential disposal of records when the need arises
- Co-ordinate the case-loads and timetables of SETs.
- Coordinate the implementation of whole school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching in line with school policies and the continuum of support practice
- Advise parents on procedures for availing of special needs services
- Prepare applications for supports for children with SEN – access to SNA support, Assistive Technology , specialised equipment and furniture and Irish exemptions
- Prepare NCSE forms and applications such as School Care Needs Profile, School Leavers and Confirmation forms , school transport, BCN1 forms and SNA appeals when required
- Liaise with parents of children with special needs and with external personnel – psychologists, therapists, SENO etc and arranging and accommodating meetings when required
- Monitor the storage of SEN files.
- Promote professional development opportunities in relation to SEN within the Special Education Team, with class teachers and SNAs
- Remain informed of current best practice within the Special Needs area
- Co-ordinate applications to the NCSE / SENO i.e. e.g. SNA, AssistiveTechnology

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- Complete and return the annual NCSE forms and applications such as the School Care Needs Profile, School Leavers and Confirmation forms, BCN1 forms and SNA appeals

4.5 The Role of the Class Teacher

Effective teaching and learning is critically important for all pupils, and especially for those with special educational needs. Meaningful inclusion implies that all pupils are taught in stimulating and supportive classroom environments where they are respected and valued. Mainstream class teachers have first-line responsibility for the education of all pupils in their classes. Accordingly, classroom teachers plan their lessons carefully to address the diverse needs within the classroom. They adapt their teaching approaches as the need arises for some pupils whose individual progress, application, motivation, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers are causes for concern. This may require targeted interventions to develop relevant adaptive skills related to these needs. All mainstream class teachers in Scoil Naomh Mhuire implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. These include:

- Co-operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms
- Collaborative problem-solving activities
- Differentiation
- Interventions to promote social and emotional competence

In Scoil Naomh Mhuire we believe that every pupil needs to be taught a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate to his/her developmental level.
Pupils' levels of interest, attention, concentration and persistence are gradually developed, extended and rewarded, using appropriate teaching strategies. To cater for the range of learning needs in any class, mainstream class teachers regularly differentiate their lessons. This is achieved by:

- Varying the level, structure, mode of instruction and pace of lessons to meet individual needs
- Adapting lessons to take account of pupils' interests
- Matching tasks to pupils' abilities and needs
- Adapting and utilising resources, including the use of technology
- Aspiring towards suitably challenging learning outcomes and assessing accordingly

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Teachers in Scoil Naomh Mhuire make lessons accessible to a broad range of pupils through the use of a variety of appropriate teaching approaches and methodologies, including active learning, small-group tuition, individual teaching, and scaffolded instruction. This, at times, requires environmental adaptations to promote curricular access.

4.6 The Role of the Special Education Teacher

Special education teachers in Scoil Naomh Mhuire are familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and to meet a variety of needs. Teaching approaches include a combination of team-teaching initiatives, co- operative teaching, early intervention, small group or individual support. Depending on the learning needs identified, a pupil with special educational needs may be supported at classroom level, or through mainstream classroom placement with additional teaching delivered through in-class or withdrawal support models.

Some pupils with more complex and enduring needs may require specific methodologies, teaching approaches and/or learning activities. Such interventions are based on careful identification of strengths and needs, including multi-disciplinary assessment, when necessary.

Special education teachers, in consultation with class teachers, plan their interventions carefully to address pupils' priority learning needs and to achieve the targets identified in the relevant Continuum of Support plan. Short-term planning reflects the Support Plan targets and break down the development of skills and content into small incremental steps to address each pupil's specific needs.

Outcomes for pupils are routinely assessed, recorded and used to review progress. These outcomes are also used to inform the targets for the next phase of intervention.

4.7 Parental Engagement

The staff and management of Scoil Naomh Mhuire recognise that good parental engagement is a critical factor in enhancing outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

Parents are consulted in relation to their children's needs and strengths on the supports and strategies being developed to support their children when they are involved in regular reviews of progress.

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The Continuum of Support process and use of the Student Support File provide valuable opportunities for the school personnel to engage with parents and to build a collaborative approach to identifying and responding to the needs of pupils with special educational needs.

4.8 Pupil Engagement

Good engagement and participation in their own education has many associated benefits for pupils. This is particularly important for pupils with special educational needs and can help enhance their academic and social and emotional outcomes. Engagement is enhanced when schools listen to and build on pupils' interests, aspirations and strengths when developing educational interventions. This involves actively including pupils in a shared assessment for learning process, setting shared learning objectives, and jointly reviewing progress. Pupil participation is supported through teaching that is responsive to the personal needs of the learner, and is further enhanced by structuring and pacing learning experiences that are challenging, engaging and enjoyable. The Student Support File offers a useful framework for promoting pupil engagement and participation at all stages of educational planning and review.

At the whole-school level, Scoil Naomh Mhuire encourages pupil engagement and participation so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have opportunities to share their views on issues that affect them in school, and so contribute to reviews of relevant policies and practices in our school. This is facilitated through the work of the Student Council.

4.9 Engagement with External Agencies

Support and guidance is available to teachers from external professionals such as NEPS Psychologists, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), the NCSE Support Service, the Inspectorate, and allied health professionals. We believe that this engagement is especially important for those pupils with more significant and enduring needs who benefit from a multi-disciplinary approach to identification of need and the development of interventions.

The needs of many pupils span both health and education services. Health services (HSE and HSE-funded services) will continue to play an important role in early identification, assessment, diagnosis, intervention and review for pupils with special

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educational needs. Scoil Naomh Mhuire is familiar with the range of health services in our locality, including referral pathways. We believe that co-ordination is enhanced when the staff of Scoil Naomh Mhuire liaise with and contribute to health-led assessment and delivery of interventions. Our school facilitates meetings between parents and various support services. The staff in Scoil Naomh Mhuire endeavour to incorporate relevant recommendations from health professionals in developing support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support.

4.10 Transitions

Good planning and support for transition helps to ensure the successful transfer of pupils from primary school to post-primary school and between special class and mainstream settings. Effective transition support together with co-ordinated planning can enhance the educational experience of the child and help reduce potential anxiety, particularly for the S.E.N. pupils. Communication is essential between Scoil Naomh Mhuire and the post primary schools/special schools.
To support the reporting and transfer of pupil information from primary to post-primary schools Scoil Naomh Mhuire utilises

- 6th Class Report Card
- My Profile sheet (for children)
- My Child's Profile sheet (for parents)
- A Special Educational Needs Summary Form is included to support the sharing of information for children with identified learning needs with parental approval.
- Meeting with the Secondary school co-ordinators.

5.0 Communication

5.1 Communication with Class Teachers

The SEN teacher will be in regular liaison with the class teacher.

5.2 Communication with Parents

Collaboration and sharing of relevant information between home and school are essential elements the success of our policy. Parents/Guardians through their unique

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knowledge of their own children have much to contribute to their child's learning. Parents/Guardians should share any information, reports or reports pending from health professionals, and/or concerns regarding their child's development. Copies of professional reports should be provided to the school whenever they become available.
Parent teacher review meetings will be held twice a year to meet with parents of children who receive support on the continuum at the level of School Support or School Support Plus
If a parent or teacher has any concerns, an appointment can be made to discuss the concerns.

5.3 Communication with BOM
The BOM will be kept informed of the SEN provision on a regular basis by the Principal.

5.4 Whole-School Collaboration
SEN issues will appear on the agenda of staff meetings and Middle Management meetings when necessary. The SENCO will co-ordinate this process.

5.5 Communication with Outside Agencies
Regular liaison with outside agencies will be maintained by the Principal, SENCO and the SEN teachers where appropriate.

5.6 Communication with Principal
The principal will be in regular contact with the SENCO and all members of SEN staff.

6.0 Record Keeping
A full record of psychological reports, other reports and records of meetings are kept in the individual student's file in a central, secure location in the school. All information is managed in accordance with the directives of both the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.

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7.0 Gifted Students

We are committed to providing an environment which encourages all students to maximise their potential and this includes students who display some form of exceptional ability. An exceptionally able student is one who has the capacity for or demonstrates high levels of performance in an academic area or within a domain specific ability in a non-academic area. This might include psychomotor ability such as dance or sport, mechanical aptitude, visual and performing arts ability or musical ability. The school has a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities which aim to identify and develop the unique talents in all children. All children will be allowed the opportunity to explore and use their inherent talents under the holistic ethos of the school. In some cases children may be given recommendations to further their abilities through relevant outside agencies.

Procedure for identification of pupils with Exceptional Ability

Before identifying any student as exceptionally able in a particular area, we aim to ensure that all students have had an opportunity to learn and succeed in this area. This makes the process of identification fair. An exceptionally able student should be identified using a variety of methods.

Criteria for Assessment

A range of strategies may be used to identify exceptionally able pupils. Such strategies may include:

- Annual standardised tests (scoring in the 98th percentile or more)
- NRIT (IQ of 130+)
- Psychological Assessments
- Teacher observation and referral
- Parental/guardian requests
- Referral by other individuals, schools or organisations.
- Verbal and non-verbal reasoning tests

From first class onwards, pupils who score on or above the 98th percentile in the Drumcondra Primary Reading Tests and Sigma-T/Drumcondra Primary Maths tests will be identified as needing further development and challenges of their ability. Where a teacher observes a child displaying exceptional ability in a specific academic area then further assessment may be carried out to establish giftedness. Where it is a

non-academic area the parent may be informed of outside agencies more suited to the development of the pupil's giftedness.

Catering for Students with Exceptional Ability

The pupils who meet the criteria for exceptionally able (IQ of 130+), as determined by class teacher following NRIT testing, will be catered for within the classroom based on a differentiated programme of work.

Responsibility and Management

The class teacher is responsible for differentiation within the classroom including acquisition and distribution of teaching resources for differentiation. Parents and teachers can work together to advocate for students who are gifted.

The SET will be responsible for the assessment stage of this process, if necessary, organisation of extension classes including timetabling (where applicable and possible), acquisition and distribution of information regarding referral and assessment by outside agencies.

The Principal will liaise with parents, SET and class teachers throughout the process.

8.0 Exemption from Irish

The School Management of Scoil Naomh Mhuire is required to observe the prescribed procedures and protocols in relation to granting pupils exemptions from the study of Irish. These proctocols and procedures are set out in DES Circular 052/2019 and in updated DES Circular 0054/2022.

9.0 Staff Professional Development

All staff members have responsibility for supporting pupils with special educational needs, the school encourages everyone, including SETs, mainstream class teachers and SNAs, to engage in appropriate and regular professional development to further build capacity to meet the educational needs of all pupils.

The staff of Scoil Naomh Mhuire regularly review their ongoing professional development needs, with reference to the provision of quality teaching and learning

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in both the mainstream classroom and special education settings. Attendees at SEN courses give feedback to the whole teaching body during staff meetings and any relevant information received on these courses is shared.

10.0 Communication, Monitoring and Review

This policy will be communicated to staff and the school community as appropriate. It will be subject to regular review in accordance with the systematic cycle of review of policies adopted in Scoil Naomh Mhuire. The BOM will ensure that SEN provision is an integral part of the school development plan and will evaluate the effectiveness and success of this policy.