St. Mary's B.N.S.
Rathfarnham

Special Educational Needs Policy 2023

St. Mary's BNS,

Grange Rd, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14.

This policy was reviewed for the fourth time from February – September 2023 following a consultative process between Special Education Co-ordinator Lizzie Houston, Special Education Team, Class Teachers, Principal, Special Needs Assistants, and our Board of Management. It was revised and updated in order to reflect current practice in our school in accordance with the new model for allocation of Special Education resources Circular 0013/17, DES Guidelines for Primary Schools, Learning Support Guidelines, NCSE Guidelines, NEPS, SENO Guidelines as well as the Education Act 1998 and EPSEN Act 2014.

Context:

St. Mary's is a mainstream school catering for over 400 boys from Junior Infants level to Sixth Class. There are currently eighteen mainstream classes in total, two of each class grouping with the exception of First Class where there are three. There are eighteen mainstream teachers, one secretary and one caretaker.

Our school currently has the following provisions to cater for children with Special Education Needs (correct as of September 2023):

- A single allocation of 6 full time Special Education Teachers (a 7th teacher shared with Loreto NS, Grange Road until November 2023.) This allocation is based on our school's educational profile to support children. This equates to 162.5 hours in allocation for 2022 - 2024 and is based on the following criteria:
  -Baseline (number of children enrolled according to POD)
  -Complex needs (current NCSE Low Incidence Resource Teaching Allocations)
  -Achievement Data held by DES (Standardised Tests)
  -Social Context (according to Survey Data)
  -Gender
- 7.83 Special Needs Assistants for children with SNA access as granted by our SENO, Nuala Connell, NCSE (as of September 2023)

Mission Statement:

As stated in the school's mission statement, St. Mary's is committed to enabling children to fulfil their academic, intellectual, moral, social, cultural, and physical potential. In this school we also believe that education flourishes in an environment where positive relationships are encouraged, where people feel valued and respected and where there is genuine tolerance, fairness, and support for those in difficulty. This philosophy underpins and informs all the work we do and is central to this policy document. (cf. School Mission Statement; School Vision Statement 24/10/07) This mission statement is in keeping with the 1998 Education Act and EPSEN Act 2004

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…To ensure that the Education System is accountable to students, their parents and the State for the Education provided, respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership between schools, patrons, students, parents, teachers and other school staff and the community served by the school'

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

Rationale:

- This policy aims to outline the school's provision of additional educational supports for students with Special Educational Needs.
- It outlines the philosophy underpinning this provision.
- This policy is written in the context of the various pieces of legislation below.
- It is a working document, and some elements may need to be reviewed annually.
- This policy is a reflection of our current practice in St. Mary's.
- This policy applies to all students with SEN and refers to Special Education as an all-encompassing term where Learning Support and Resource Teaching were used previously. It also includes students with exceptional ability who attend St. Mary's BNS and the provision for their needs.

Legal Framework

This policy is written in the context of the following legislation, guidelines, and circulars

- 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)
- GDPR Legislation (2018)
- The Freedom of Education Acts (1997 and 2003)
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
- DES Circular Letters related to SEN
- NCSE guidelines
- IEP guidelines
- NEPS Guidelines
- SESS guidelines

Our aims for SEN in St. Mary's:

- Developing a positive ethos and inclusive 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 in order for them to become independent lifelong learners
- A commitment to developing pupils' academic, social, emotional, and independent living skills
- A focus on high aspirations and on improving outcomes for all pupils
- Enabling pupils with special educational needs to participate in the full curriculum for their class level
- Developing self-esteem and positive attitudes towards school and learning in all pupils
- Providing students with consistent opportunities to experience success
- Providing supplementary teaching in literacy and numeracy
- Involving parents in supporting their children through effective home-school communication
- Promoting collaboration among teachers in the implementation of the whole-school policy on Special Education

Guiding Principles

The school recognises that the aims outlined above will be achieved by following these guiding principles:

- Implementing effective whole-school policies that reflect current best practice in SEN, particularly the Continuum of Support (NEPS Guidelines.)
- Whole school involvement and approach to teaching and learning in relation to pupils with SEN.
- Ensuring that students with SEN are educated in an inclusive environment where diversity is respected and valued.
- Ensuring that all staff members are aware of the specific needs of students and are given sufficient training in SEN to effectively work with these children.
- Ensuring that expertise and professional development in the area of SEN is valued and encouraged.
- Encouraging and fostering positive communication and partnerships with parents in order to achieve the best possible outcomes.
- Establishing a framework for planning, reporting, reviewing and communication within the school and between the school and parents/ outside agencies e.g., Staged Approach documents including IEPs, IPLPs, PPPs, review records.
- Outlining procedures and practices for the prevention of learning difficulties, such as Early Intervention, Aistear, In-class support.
- Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need through effective implementation of the revised model for allocating SEN supports.

Definitions

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, section 1)

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)

The Revised Model for Special Education

Specific Objectives of the Revised Model for Special Education:

The manner in which resources are allocated to schools has changed significantly in response to shortcomings in the previous model, as identified by the NCSE Report Delivery for Pupils with Special Education Needs (NCSE 2014). This revised model has been in effect since September 2017 and affords our school greater autonomy in deploying our Special Education Teachers. Our policy reflects the change in this process and focuses on how we identify needs in our school, how we meet these needs effectively and how we monitor, and record progress made. A key principle underpinning this revised model and our Special Education policy is that all pupils, irrespective of special educational needs, are welcomed and enabled to enrol in their local schools. In addition, a fundamental objective is that special education teaching resources are utilised in the optimum manner to improve learning experiences and educational outcomes for pupils with special educational needs. SETs are to be used solely for the support of pupils with identified special educational needs, including those pupils for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL). They are not to be used to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio in mainstream classes. Neither are they to have sole responsibility for the delivery of any curriculum subject to any particular class.

Pupils with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest level of support, and whenever possible, will be supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.

The school establishes and maintains a core team of teachers to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. All members will be given access to relevant CPD to support the diverse needs of pupils with special educational needs.

Special Education Circular 0013/2017 provides full details on the revised Special Education Teaching Allocation.

Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs – A Three Step Process

In St. Mary's, a three-step process is in place to guide identification, intervention, and monitoring of outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

Step 1 - The Continuum of Support

We use 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 St. Mary's 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 new model. By using the Continuum of Support framework, the staff in St. Mary's 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 provides useful resources to support this (for example, Learning Environment Checklist, Teacher Checklist for Whole-class Structures and Supports).

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.

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. Appendix 1

This is informed by:

- Parental consultation
- Teacher observation records
- Teacher-designed measures /assessments
- Basic needs checklist *
- Learning environment checklist*
- Pupil consultation - My Thoughts About School Checklist *
- Literacy and numeracy tests
- Screening tests

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

***These checklists are available in the Continuum of Support Guidelines for Teachers and attached as Appendix 2**

Level 2 - School Support

Following a review of Classroom Support intervention, further support may be deemed necessary to support a child in any area of his education, to include academic, social, and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. A School Support Plan may also be devised following results in Standardised assessments indicating a need for support in the areas of literacy and/ or numeracy.

Selection of Pupils for Learning Support in Literacy and Numeracy

- The principle of Early Intervention applies; therefore, pupils in junior classes are given priority in the allocation of Learning Support. Junior Infant pupils are screened using teacher observation and the Belfield Infant Assessment Profile is administered on pupils presenting with possible learning difficulties.
- From Senior Infants upwards, all pupils are screened annually, using appropriate screening tests. Drumcondra Early Literacy and Numeracy Tests (Senior Infants), NNRIT (1st and 4th Class), Drumcondra Reading and Spelling Test (1st – 6th Class) and SIGMA-T Maths (1st – 6th) are administered (see Assessment Policy)
- Priority for Learning Support is given to those pupils who perform **at or below the 18th percentile,** excluding in the main, pupils who are on Stage 3 of the School Support Plan.
- In the case of pupils performing **at or below the 18th percentile**, parental consent is sought prior to diagnostic assessment. (Appendix 3 Parental Consent Form) The tests in use are DELT/ DENT Diagnostic Tests for Literacy and Numeracy, PhAB, Jackson Word Recognition and Sayles Non-Word Reading Test, Diagnostic Reading Analysis, Diagnostic Spelling Test, WIAT III for Teachers and Mathematics Assessment for Learning & Teaching. These are administered by the Special Education Teacher. A further consultative meeting between those concerned then takes place to consider the outcome of the assessment and whether supplementary teaching is recommended.

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

- Teacher observation records
- Teacher-designed measures / assessments

- Parent and pupil interviews
- Learning environment checklist
- Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy
- Formal observation of behaviour including ABC charts, frequency measures
- 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. Appendix 4 Stage 2 Documents – School Support

IPLP Planning: Where the nature of support is of in the area of literacy and numeracy, an IPLP will be devised.

The Class Teacher and the Special Education Teacher collaborate to devise Individual Profile and Learning Programmes (IPLP) and/or Group Education Learning Programmes in consultation with the parents, the pupils involved may also contribute to setting their own short-term targets.

Individual Profile and Learning Programme and Group Learning Programme
The Individual Profile Learning Programme/Group Learning Plan will be in accordance with the criteria as advised in the Learning Support Guidelines, issued by the DES in 2000. The plan will address the pupils' full range of needs and will include:

- Details from Class Teacher
- Assessment results
- Other relevant information, e.g., reports from other agencies
- Learning strengths and attainments
- Priority learning needs
- Learning targets
- Class-based learning activities
- Supplementary support activities to include ICT
- Home support activities

Each plan will be monitored through teacher observation, the keeping of planning and progress records and through the pupil's own feedback.

A review will take place at the end of instructional term. The learning support teacher and/or class teacher may meet parents to discuss progress.

The SET will maintain the following documentation in individualised files

1. Individual Profile and Learning Programme
2. Short term planning and programme record
3. Samples of written work
4. Diagnostic assessments
5. Recommendations from a Psychologist if an Educational Assessment has been administered

A School Support Plan operates for an agreed period and is subject to review.

Timetabling
The provision of learning support will complement the regular class teaching and efforts are made to ensure that pupils do not miss the same curricular area each time they attend learning support.

The provision of learning support may include withdrawal of pupils from their classroom and/or in-class support. In-class support, if appropriate, will be jointly designed and monitored by the class teacher and learning support teacher.

Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching
In general children should not stay for more than two years in Supplementary Teaching unless they are still at or below the 18th percentile. Following the end of instructional term review, as detailed above, a decision will be made to continue /discontinue the provision of supplementary teaching.

The criteria on which this decision is made include:

- Has the pupil achieved some/all of the learning targets set?
- Will the pupil be able to cope in the classroom learning context?

A decision to continue the provision of supplementary teaching will result in a revision of the pupil's IPLP.

The decision-making process will involve consultation between the Class Teacher, SET and parents. Account will also be taken of the overall learning support demands in the school.

Children's progress within the class will be monitored closely subsequent to the cessation of supplementary teaching. Methods used to monitor progress include formative testing and observation of work by class teacher; the implementation of the assessment policy; screening, standardised and diagnostic testing (see Assessment Policy)

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 and pupil interviews
- Functional assessment
- Results of psychological assessment 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. Appendix 5 Stage 3 School Support Plus

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 needs in such areas as oral language, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development, and application to learning.
The SEN Tracker (Appendix 6) is used in St. Mary's BNS to record numbers of children on each stage of the Continuum of Support and is used to guide the allocation of additional teaching supports for pupils with Special Educational Needs contains the following areas:

- Stage of Support (Stage One: Classroom Support/ Stage Two: School Support/ Stage Three: School Support Plus)
- Pupil Name
- Class
- Description of SEN
- Nature of Supports (Literacy, numeracy, social, emotional, behavioural, life-skills)
- Focus of Support (In-class, withdrawal in small groups or individual, school yard)

During the planning and review stages of allocation of resources in Special Education, we use SEN trackers to 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. We agree which teacher(s) will cater for these groups/individuals and when and where the teaching will take place. In St. Mary's, we plan to ensure that pupils with the greatest level of need should receive the greatest level of support from teachers with relevant expertise and availability.
SEN Trackers have also been established in our school as a tracking and recording system, to ensure that the progress of all pupils in meeting their identified targets is monitored.

Educational planning

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 St. Mary's, the process involves the class teacher, special education teachers, parents, the pupil, and relevant professionals. Interventions draw on evidence-informed practice and the 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
- timeframe for review

Student Support File

A Student Support File Template (Appendix 7) has been developed by the staff in St. Mary's BNS in collaboration with NEPS 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 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 reflects 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.)

Having identified a pupil's needs and the educational planning required to meet those needs, this second step emphasises the importance of effective teaching and learning strategies.

The role of the class teacher in meeting the needs of children with SEN:

Effective teaching and learning are 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 St. Mary's 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
- Heterogeneous group work – all learning levels represented within a group
- Differentiation
- Interventions to promote social and emotional competence
- Embedding Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching, learning and assessment

In St. Mary's we believe that every pupil needs to be taught a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate to his 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

Teachers in our school aim to 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 work, individual teaching, and scaffolded instruction. This, at times, requires environmental adaptations to promote curricular access.

The Role of the Special Education Teacher (SET) in meeting the needs of children with SEN:

Special education teachers in St. Mary's 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 and 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.

<u>One-to-one teaching</u>

Provided it is deemed appropriate, one-to-one teaching may be provided in order to best cater for a child's specific needs. Where one-to-one teaching is necessary, parents will be advised of this arrangement. SE T classrooms have vision panels and windows installed to ensure the protection of children and staff. The sensory room has a camera installed for further safeguarding.

<u>Collaborative/ Team Teaching</u>

Collaborative teaching is recognised as an effective practice to promote inclusion and differentiation within the classroom. In St. Mary's, SEN resources may be deployed to classes for a period of time or for a particular subject to facilitate collaborative teaching. An IPLP will be in place for any specific children whose education is being targeted and their progress will be monitored, as will the suitability of co-teaching for that child/ class. The SET and class teacher will plan collaboratively and may use any co-teaching strategy that best suits the class/ level of need e.g., one teaching, one assisting; station teaching; parallel teaching; alternative teaching. Appendix 8 Collaborative Teaching Approaches – An Overview

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 breaks down the development of skills and content into small incremental steps to address each pupil's specific

needs on a weekly basis. 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.

Early Intervention and Prevention

In view of the substantial international evidence that early-intervention and prevention programmes can lead to improved outcomes for pupils, we ensure that a considerable amount of our teaching resources is used for this purpose. As a means of preventing the occurrence of difficulties in the areas of language; communication; literacy and numeracy; physical skills; social and emotional development and behaviour, as far as possible, the following strategies are being implemented in St. Mary's:

- The development and implementation of agreed whole-school approaches to language development e.g., the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum, focus on phonological awareness & phonics in the early years, oral language development throughout the school.
- Belfield Infant Screening Test: This is a screening test carried out on a number of pupils in the second term of Junior Infants. Each year, teachers will select a number of children who are presenting with difficulties or weaknesses in any area of the Junior Infant programme. The BIAP is administered by an SET after consent is given by parents. The BIAP aids with the identification of early indicators of learning difficulties and styles, social skills, language, and communication, emotional/ behavioural as well as physical difficulties. A plan is then put in place based on the outcome of the BIAP and children are placed on Stage One of the Continuum of Support, and given appropriate support, where necessary.
- Social Skills support: small group interventions are in place in all class groupings where the focus is on social skills such as communication, turn-taking, sharing, well-being, problem solving and the promotion of positive behaviour.
- Participation in the Aistear programme in Junior and Senior Infants, an invaluable early childhood framework that allows children to learn and develop language, literacy, and numeracy skills through play.
- An Early Intervention programme is implemented from September in Senior Infants. This programme runs daily and involves small-group, intensive teaching with a focus on the development of oral language skills and phonological awareness. Children's progress is reviewed after a specified timeframe has elapsed (13-20 weeks) and a follow-up programme is provided where necessary.
- Ready, Set, Go Maths Programme is implemented in Junior and Senior Infants where concepts are taught through games and the focus is on the language of Maths.
- The development and implementation of an agreed whole-school approach to the Maths programme e.g., Maths language, oral/ mental maths skills & problem-solving skills.
- Promotion of parental involvement through their attendance at induction meetings for parents of incoming Junior Infants. Close communication with parents through the use of Class Dojo, Seesaw the school website and Aladdin. Parents may be invited to assist with Aistear.
- Formal and informal Parent/Teacher meetings.
- Implementing paired reading with parents and monthly 'Paired Reading' between the Junior and Senior pupils in the school.
- A print-rich environment and a rich reading culture in St. Mary's.
- Early intervention by the class teacher resulting in provision of additional support in literacy and numeracy.
- On-going observation and assessment of language, literacy, and numeracy skills of pupils by class teacher.

- A supplementary online reading comprehension programme from 1st to 6th that is tailored to each child's individual reading level (Accelerated Reading)
- We are currently trialling a new online Maths programme (Freckle) that complements and reinforces the curriculum and provides on-going feedback and assessment.
- An individualised spellings programme Spellings for Me is used from 2nd – 6th class
- Implementation of the Fun Friends/ Friends for Life Programme. Friends for Life can be implemented in the class or in small groups as a means of preventing anxiety and building resilience, or similar evidence-based programmes. Three of our SETs have completed the 2-day NEPS training in implementing this evidence based, NEPS endorsed programme. Staff are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the language and rationale of the programme. *Appendix 9 Friends for Life info*

In St. Mary's, we adopt a consultative approach and use assessment data to regularly evaluate the efficacy of these interventions. We believe that developing and sharing successful practice has the potential to contribute to improvements in the overall provision for pupils with special educational needs. At times, we may deploy additional teaching resources in junior classes to strengthen station teaching approaches which target the promotion of language, literacy, and numeracy skills. The use of early-intervention and prevention programmes helps mitigate the development of learning, social and emotional difficulties. We recognise the importance of seeking advice and training in well-validated programmes to address behavioural and emotional needs.

Target-setting

We believe that good target-setting is central to effective teaching and learning for pupils with special education needs. In St. Mary's, targets in Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus documents are expressed in a way that is measurable and observable and reflect the specific special educational needs of individual pupils (for example, focus on social and emotional difficulties if that is a primary area of concern). The teachers endeavour to set targets which are achievable within a specified timeframe and also challenge and build on existing knowledge and address pupils' holistic needs.

Best practice indicates that targets 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 consult with parents when setting targets and reviewing progress. The views of pupils are also included in this process, 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.

Step 3 - Monitoring and recording outcomes for pupils 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 St. Mary's 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.

In addition to monitoring outcomes at the individual level, we believe that it is also important to review outcomes at group, class, and whole-school level. This review includes measures of attainment, communication, independence, attendance, social inclusion, and well-being (for example, sense of belonging and connectedness to school) for pupils with special educational needs. *My Thoughts about School Checklist is used termly by class teachers at Senior Level by means of a well-being audit – *Appendix 7*

Allocating Special Education teaching resources to effectively meet needs

Special education teachers are deployed to address the needs of pupils with special educational needs in St. Mary's. 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) In St. Mary's, we believe that effective communication and engagement between class teachers and SETs is best achieved by allocating SETs to particular classes or class levels, depending on overall levels of need. This facilitates a closer working partnership and allows for greater collaboration in planning. Continuity is valued and arranged, where possible, so that SETs are working with a class/ group that they are familiar with.

Communication with parents is also 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 are involved in termly reviews of progress.

When allocating teaching resources, the management and staff of St. Mary's are mindful of the benefits of early-intervention and prevention programmes and allocate teaching resources as required, based on identified needs and school context. We aim 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 are 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 support; some may require the same level, while others may require more intensive supports, thus progressing to the next level.

When deploying teaching resources, we recognise the essential need to maintain time for co-ordinating, planning and reviewing activities in September, January, and June to ensure effective and optimal use of supports. Co-ordination time is, however, kept to a minimum in order to ensure that teaching time is maximised. Additionally, St. Mary's acknowledges the fact that flexibility in terms of resource allocation is required to allow for emerging needs during the school year. In our school, the Principal and SEN co-ordinator endeavour to inform the SEN Team and whole staff of continuous professional development opportunities, especially when a training opportunity arises for their particular caseload.

The work of the Special Education Teacher entails providing as many supplementary teaching lessons as possible. **However, the school plan should recognise that, in addition to providing supplementary teaching, the Special Education Teacher must also allocate time to non-teaching activities.** These activities could include overseeing the early intervention and prevention programmes, conducting diagnostic assessments, maintaining and reviewing pupil records, co-ordinating special needs services and consulting with teachers and parents. (cf. p. 29 Learning-Support Guidelines: Whole School Planning and Organisation for Learning Support)
Meetings with parents will be timetabled outside of school hours where possible.

IEP Planning

Where a special educational need of a more persistent and complex nature is identified, or where a diagnosis is given and a professional recommends support of an intensive nature, an IEP will be devised. Individual Education Plans will address the pupil's needs and learning priorities. The SET will meet with the class teacher to plan a work schedule. Plans will be evaluated and adjusted if the pupil's needs necessitate it. The plan will include:

- Pupil's personal details
- Learning strengths and attainments: e.g., based on teacher observation, parent observations, SNA observation etc.
- Learning needs: e.g., based on psychological report, teacher input, parental input, pupil input etc.
- Pupil's current level of performance including assessment results and information from reports from other agencies
- Any exemptions that may be in place
- Pupil's priority learning needs
- Learning targets – See page 34 Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process, NCSE
- Learning Strategies appropriate for the child
- Resources and personnel involved
- Class based learning activities-differentiation strategies
- Supplementary Support Activities
- Type of support, frequency, and duration
- Home Support Activities
- Implementation of the plan
- Date for review of the IEP and review outcomes

The format for IEPs is available in the Special Educational Needs-A Continuum of Support – Resource Pack for Teachers, NEPS, 2007 and Appendix 9

- For pupils with Additional Needs, the SET will gather information from class teachers, parents, and outside agencies to determine each pupil's learning strengths and needs and co-ordinate, an individual profile, and an Individual Education Plan for the pupil. Resources and personnel involved will be listed on the plan.
- Psychological assessment reports, test results and teacher/parent observations will be used to find the pupils current level of performance. Learning needs and priority learning needs will be selected based on this and realistic and measurable learning targets will be agreed. Teaching resources appropriate to the learning style of the pupil will be used to implement the programme. When the education plan identifies resources over and above those normally available in a mainstream school setting, the principal or SEN Co will bring this to the attention of the SENO and/or the NCSE.
- Individual Education Plans will be implemented from September/October to January, and updated plan will be implemented from February to June, reviewed in June.
- The pupil is involved in the IEP process by being given the opportunity to express their likes, dislikes, interests, strengths, things I find easy/ difficult. This is usually done orally and recorded by the SET using the My Thoughts about School Checklist.
- The school year will be divided into two instructional terms (Term 1 = September – January and Term 2 = February – June) so the SET will meet once during the year (September/October) with the parents and class teachers, or as the need arises. At these meetings, concerns are shared; targets and activities are discussed and planned. Each SET will record the minutes/outcomes of this meeting. Pages 24 – 25 of Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process, NCSE gives guidance on how to convene and conduct an IEP meeting Appendix 10
- The SET and the Class Teachers have access to IEPs on Aladdin and the parents will be given a hard copy to sign.
- The SET is responsible for the on-going consultations with psychologists, SENO, and others outside agencies.
- The Principal Teacher will oversee initial contact with parents, liaise with assessment services, and where appropriate, make arrangements for additional educational provision for children with diagnosed additional needs.

Parental Engagement

The staff and management of St. Mary's recognise that good parental engagement is a critical factor in enhancing outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.
At the beginning of each year, a general letter is given to the parents of every child in the school to explain the nature and variety of supports and to introduce the SET for that particular class/grouping. *Appendix 11*

Consent is sought for general support to include movement breaks, social group support, etc. Individualised consent letters are sent to parents of children who have been identified for more specific and intense interventions for a SEN or for numeracy/ literacy support. *Appendix 12 letters of consent*

Parents are consulted in relation to their children's needs and strengths on the supports and strategies being developed to support their children and when they are involved in regular reviews of progress when developing and reviewing policies relating to the education of children with special

educational needs. This helps to ensure that parents understand the school's approaches and better enables them to support their children in transitioning through the school.
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.
Appendix 13 sets out some key questions which schools can use when reflecting on and reviewing their existing practice in promoting parental engagement – to be distributed as part of review.

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, St. Mary's 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.

Engagement with External Bodies and Agencies

Support and guidance is available to teachers from external professionals such as NEPS. Our current NEPS psychologist is Andrew Kennedy who works closely with our school in a supportive and consultative role.
Psychologists, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), the NCSE Support Service, the
Inspectorate, and health professionals. St. Mary's liaises closely with these services and bodies in order to optimise the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs at the individual, group, or whole-school level. We believe that this 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. Our SENO is Nuala Connell who is an NCSE appointed organiser to provide a direct service of resources and supports to our school and parents of children within this geographical area and provides them with an appropriate education service.
The needs of many pupils span both health and education services. Health services (HSE and HSE-funded services such as the Children's Disability Network Team) will continue to play a key role in early identification, assessment and diagnosis, intervention, and review for pupils with special educational needs. In St. Mary's, we are familiar with the range of health services in our locality, including referral pathways. We believe that co-ordination is enhanced when the staff of St. Mary's liaise with and contribute to health-led assessment and delivery of interventions.

Our school has had the opportunity to engage with the second-level services of Middletown Centre for Autism from March 2018 – March 2019. These supports have helped the entire staff to professionally develop in the area of ASD, for the school to develop frameworks and best practice strategies in teaching children with ASD and to devise an ASD policy specific to our school. See section on ASD.

Our school facilitates meetings between parents and various support services. The staff in St. Mary's endeavour to incorporate relevant recommendations from health professionals in developing support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support.

Transitions

Good planning and support for transition helps to ensure the successful transfer of pupils from Early Childcare/ Pre-school/ home to Primary school; from Primary school to Post-Primary school; transferring between primary schools and from special to mainstream settings. Effective transition support and planning can enhance the educational experience of the child and help reduce potential anxiety, particularly for the SEN pupils.

Transition to Primary School

The first transition that children experience is from Early Childcare/ Pre-school/ home to primary school. We use the application form to identify any additional needs and open up the channels of communication with parents as early as possible in order to access necessary resources, put resources and supports in place and to plan for as seamless a transition as possible. Information gathering, at this stage, about the child and the level and type of need is hugely beneficial and we refer to NCSE materials and guidelines as well as resources provided by Middletown Centre for Autism. Transition to Primary School resources attached as *Appendix 14* See section on Application Form *Appendix 15* 2023 Application Form

The NCSE Starting School Booklet for Parents is made available to parents of children with special education needs as part of the transition to primary school. *Appendix 16*

Your child with special educational needs is likely to make a more easy and successful start in school when careful planning and preparation is in place. Once your child has a confirmed place in a school, it is useful to start planning for his/her arrival at the school.

Schools often hold a planning meeting before children with more complex special educational needs start school. This is good practice. The planning meeting should include you as the parent, the school principal, if possible, the class teacher and as necessary other professionals who have been involved with your child before he/she started school.

At this planning meeting, you can let the school know about your expectations for your child's education and any particular anxieties your child has about starting school. It is also important to give the school any information that might help the school to meet his/her needs. This includes any relevant professional reports (e.g., reports written by psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and so on) as these can help to ensure that the school is aware of your child's strengths, abilities, and needs. This information can also help the school to decide if school policies need to be developed or revised around caring for a child with special educational needs or medical needs, e.g., behaviour policies or administration of medications policy.

The school staff may find it helpful to consult with relevant professionals who work or have worked with your child. The relevant professionals may include visiting teachers for children who are blind/visually impaired and those who are deaf/hard of hearing, preschool staff, psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, or physiotherapists and so on.

A visit to the incoming child's Montessori/Early Years setting will be organised by the SENCo and Principal with the consent of the parents. This visit will include feedback from the Montessori teacher/ AIMS personnel.

Extra visits to our school will be facilitated for children with additional needs to provide a smooth transition to Junior Infants. Where possible, we will arrange for the class teacher/ SNA and SET to meet the child and parents.

Parents are asked to furnish the school with Mo Scéal document if available form the early years setting/ Montessori. These will be kept on file by class teachers.

The Transition to Post-Primary

The transition from primary to post-primary can be a stressful event for all students and their parents, and this can be compounded when the child has special educational needs. Links are already established with 'transition' schools in the area for our pupils. Visits to these schools during 6th class have helped ease the anxiety levels for the children in our school. In 6th class, we implement the 'Transition to Secondary School' Programme (SESS) *Appendix 17*

Parents will be supported during this transition and meetings and review assessments will be facilitated where possible. Parents of children with SEN will be given a copy of NCSE Booklet 'Changing Schools - Moving from Primary to Post-Primary School: Guidelines for Parents/Guardians of Students with Special Educational Needs' *Appendix 18*

A guest speaker, Mr. Pat Courtney, is invited to the school to speak to the 6th class pupils in the last term for a workshop on the transition to Secondary School, offering practical advice and giving general information on what to expect. Tips from SESS.ie website below are given to 6th class teachers to implement.

Social skills support will focus on this topic for the last term of 6th class and the Black Sheep Press app – Talking about Secondary School will be used.

Tips for Transition – Suggestions for Primary Schools

- Teach the students how to read school timetables and get samples from post-primary schools – this can be done within whole class maths lessons
- Give the class different due dates for certain pieces of homework in order to prepare them for a more complex timetable
- Consider colour coding copies and books. For example, place a red sticker on the edges of the Maths book and Maths copy, blue on English, etc. This strategy can facilitate organisational skills.
- Teach key words for specific subjects such as Home Economics, Metalwork (Materials and Technology), Business Studies, etc. This can be done within the oral language strand of the English curriculum.
- Integrate transition activities into the SPHE programme. For example, teach students about post-primary school, dealing with change, etc.
- Attend open evenings in the post-primary school. This is a good opportunity to take photographs of rooms, etc. These can be used to familiarise the student with the school prior to entry.
- Identify key personnel in the post-primary school and explain their roles to the student: e.g., class tutor, year head, chaplain, guidance counsellor, etc.
- Model and practice recording homework in a journal at the end of lessons as opposed to the end of the school day

- Encourage parents to inform the post-primary school as soon as possible in relation to their child's SEN, as resource hours and assistive technology may need to be reapplied for by the receiving school
- Be prepared for the post-primary school to make enquiries once the student has enrolled.
- Have a 'Leaving Ceremony' on the last day in sixth class – this is a clear signal to the students that they are moving on.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has developed a suite of materials to support the reporting and transfer of pupil information from primary to post primary schools.

These include

- 6th Class Report Card
- My Profile sheet for children
- My Child's Profile sheet for parent(s)
- A Special Educational Needs Summary Form is included to support the sharing of information for children with identified learning needs

  NCCA Education Passport *Appendix 19*

Since the 2014/15 school year, schools are required to use the Education Passport materials detailed above and to forward them to the relevant post-primary school, following confirmation of enrolment, by the end of June. (Circular 45/2014)

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

St. Mary's BNS has established, and intends to maintain**, a** skilled special education support team to guide provision. Since all teachers have responsibility for teaching pupils with special educational needs, the management of St. Mary's encourages all staff members to engage in appropriate CPD to develop the capacity of our school to meet the educational needs of all pupils. The staff of St. Mary's regularly reviews their ongoing professional development needs, with reference to the provision of quality teaching and learning in both the mainstream classroom and special education settings. The school **uses** a self-reflective questionnaire (Appendix 20) and other audit instruments (see CPD audit tool used below *Appendix 21*) to review their professional development needs and to plan suitable training initiatives.
In recent years, members of staff have attended workshops provided by Treetops Early Intervention/ School Age Team; Lucena Sensory Workshops/ CAMHS; Enable Ireland; St. Michael's House; SESS Workshops: Pathways to Prevention/ CABA; SESS TEACCH 2 Day Workshop; NEPS Workshop on Dyslexia and Best Practice in Literacy Interventions; whole staff attended a workshop on the introduction to Dyslexia given by Dr. Pauline Cogan; 5 day Professional Workshop in ASD with Middletown Centre for Autism and Attention Autism Training for SETs. 2-day NEPS training in delivering Friends for Life Programme

Middletown Centre for Autism
In 2017, our school was notified of a successful application to access intensive Learning Support and Assessment Services with Middletown Centre for Autism through a referral made on behalf of a child in our school. This Learning Support and Assessment Service delivers intensive assessment and learning support for children and young people, who despite specialist input continue to experience difficulties in their educational setting. It is a second level service aiming to provide further

assessment, learning support and intervention for children and young people with autism where, despite engagement with first level services provided by the Department of Education and Skills (National Educational Psychological Service, Special Education Support Service, National Behavioural Support Service, National Council for Special Education) and Health Services Executive (HSE)/ HSE funded services, the child continues to present with significant and enduring behavioural and emotional difficulties.
The service utilises a trans-disciplinary approach to service delivery. The team includes Teachers, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, and Autism Intervention Officers and Learning Support Officers. The service delivery was provided for one year, from March 2018- March 2019 and has provided:

- A detailed trans-disciplinary assessment and learning support plan
- Specific training for those working with the child and young person referred to the service
- Home support and advice for parents in relation to their child's education
- Support for children and young people for up to 10 months according to needs
- General training for the staff in autism awareness and approaches in education

A Whole School Approach - ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder)

In response to the new model for allocating resources to children with special needs, staff at St. Mary's are adopting a whole school approach to children with ASD.

Meeting the Needs of Pupils with Autism

Background

Autism is a pervasive, developmental disorder; difficulties experienced by those diagnosed with autism can vary in severity. Current estimates state that approximately 1 in every 150 children now receives a formal diagnosis of autism. This has meant that the numbers of pupils attending the school who are diagnosed with autism has risen and may well continue to rise in the near future. This policy has been written to supplement other current policies in the school and should be considered alongside the existing policies and documents already in place particularly the school's SEN Policy.

Aims

St. Mary's BNS aims to meet the needs of its pupils with autism by:

- Offering a variety of consistent, high-quality provision
- Ensuring that staff have access to CPD and support
- Collaborating with a range of professionals and parents
- Planning to address the individual and specific needs of pupils with autism
- Delivering curriculum which balances social and academic need

Staffing

Each class is led by a classroom teacher. Our school also benefits from a high level of support from SNAs, 7.83 in total (correct as of September 2023).
At St. Mary's we believe that pupils' independence should be promoted wherever possible and, although there will be opportunities for pupils to work 1:1 with staff throughout the day, we do not have a policy of providing continual 1:1 support for pupils. Wherever possible, St. Mary's will cover

staff absence with existing staff from within the school in order to promote consistency and continuity which is particularly beneficial for pupils with autism.

Learning Environments

An organised and well-planned learning environment is essential for the holistic development of pupils with autism. All learning environments within St. Mary's BNS will therefore provide:

- A high level of visual support
- Clear teaching areas and opportunities for interaction
- The necessary amount of structure to address the needs of pupils with autism in each class
- Opportunities to develop intended and spontaneous communication
- Low arousal environments where necessary – a sensory room is available, and most classrooms have a quiet/ calming area available to children where necessary.

Curriculum

The overall curriculum delivered at St. Mary's is based on the National Curriculum which is differentiated to meet the needs of students with Autism**.** The curriculum is designed to be broad and balanced taking into account the social and academic needs of pupils with autism. The overall curriculum delivered at St. Mary's includes opportunities to address the following:

- Communication
- Interaction
- Emotional Regulation
- Flexibility of thought
- Sensory sensitivity
- Real life experiences outside of the school environment

Planning

Teachers' short-term planning follows the school's own schemes of work which are adapted from the National Curriculum. Teachers differentiate learning opportunities for pupils with autism in a variety of ways, all of which are detailed in their class plans.

Additionally, each pupil with a diagnosis of autism has a pupil needs analysis which highlights areas of learning needs and strengths and an Individual Education Plan where necessary, which covers some of the following areas:

- Communication
- Interaction
- Flexibility of thought
- Sensory sensitivity
- Emotional Regulation

Behaviour

The impact of autism on pupils may cause elevated levels of frustration and/or anxiety resulting in challenging behaviour which presents a barrier to their learning. At St. Mary's BNS, we acknowledge that the following basic principles of good autism practice can reduce the incidence of such behaviour:

- Ensuring all staff have an awareness of the strengths and difficulties associated with autism
- Providing a structured and consistent approach which enhances predictability
- Supporting pupils' communication in order to reduce frustration
- An understanding that social interaction can place additional demands on pupils over and above academic learning intentions
- Addressing sensory needs throughout the day helps pupils to remain calm and focused

CPD for Staff
Our staff has a range of CPD opportunities to enhance their understanding of autism and to develop their autism practice. Autism specific CPD has been delivered through Middletown Centre for Autism. Classroom teachers and SNAs also have access to individualised and practical support from the Special Education Team and SEN Co-ordinator.

Collaboration
Autism can be a complex and challenging condition therefore we recognise the need to collaborate with a range of other people to provide a holistic and consistent environment.
St. Mary's holds regular meetings; additionally, we collaborate with:
Parents
Education Services
Middletown Centre for Autism
Speech and Language Therapists (SALTs)
Occupational Therapists (OTs)
Physiotherapists
Educational Psychologists (EPs)
Social Services Personnel

Further strategies for learning and teaching can be found by following this link:

https://www.sess.ie/categories/autismautistic-spectrum-disorders/aspergers/tips-learning-and-teaching

A Whole School Approach – ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

In response to the new model for allocating resources to children with special needs, the staff at St. Mary's adopts a whole school approach to ADHD. The ADHD Ireland website provides the following information on ADHD.

ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a medical/neurobiological condition in which the brain's neurotransmitter chemicals; noradrenalin and dopamine do not work properly.

It is a disorder that, without proper identification, treatment, and management, can have serious and long-lasting consequences and/or complications for an individual.

It is a genetic and long-term condition which affects learning and behaviour right through the school years and in many cases beyond into adulthood.

ADHD is a disorder that can co-exist to a greater or lesser degree, with any or other disorders such as dyslexia, autism, learning disorder, dyspraxia, conduct disorder, oppositional defiance disorder.

It is important to note that ADHD is a very treatable condition. If diagnosed and properly treated, people with ADHD can reach their potential and lead happy and successful lives.

What are the Core Behaviours of a Child with ADHD/ADD?

ADHD/ADD is usually described as being made up of three core behaviours:

Predominantly inattentive type – problems of attention, distractibility, short-term memory, and learning.

Predominantly hyperactive type – impulsive, poorly self-monitored behaviour.

Combined type – most children with ADHD/ADD fall into this category.

Symptoms: Inattentiveness

- Easily distracted
- Flit from task to task
- Slow to complete schoolwork and forget instructions.
- Inattentiveness can be confusing because of its selectivity. The child who is extremely inattentive while doing schoolwork may be fully focused when playing video games, carrying out practical procedures or when being tested by a psychologist.
- Inattention to verbal instructions and a short-term memory are also associational problems

Symptoms: Impulsiveness

- Shooting from the hip" both verbally and physically.
- Talking over the top of others
- Can be accident-prone and have noticeably short fuses
- Answer questions in class even before the question has been completed.
- Act without malice but also without forethought, which can lead to problems in the yard
- Do not necessarily learn from the consequences of their behaviour
- Prone to volatility where they can escalate out of control if their behaviour is handled insensitively.
- Often teachers and parents cannot understand why someone so intelligent can act so inappropriately.

Symptoms: Hyperactivity

- In school, children with ADHD can appear restless, they fidget, have difficulty remaining seated and find it hard to stop talking.
- They can be seen to fiddle with anything they can touch, tapping their fingers / feet, and looking around at everyone.
  In the yard, they can be highly active in comparison to their peers.
  Upon return to the classroom, they can find it difficult to settle back in.

Diagnosis:

Early diagnosis of ADHD is important so the right support can be received.

- If you think a child may have ADHD, parents should first contact your GP to discuss their concerns and seek a referral. The GP will usually refer parents to a psychiatrist, psychologist, or paediatrician for assessment.

- This professional will compile a case history, including when symptoms began and for how long they persisted. Parents and teachers usually help with this assessment by filling out questionnaires.

- Assessments often include medical and psychological evaluations, but at the very minimum they will involve a clinical interview – each specialist differs in their approach. However, this does not mean that diagnosis is not accurate and/or valid. There are strict diagnostic criteria for ADD/ADHD which draws the line of demarcation between ADHD and other conditions.

- ADHD will affect everyone differently, and people with ADHD often have additional coexisting difficulties or disorders, such as learning disorders, so assessments must be flexible and adapt to the specific individual.

Treatment and Interventions

- Education and awareness for all involved: the individual, family, and teachers
- Medication
- Behaviour Therapy
- Parenting courses
- Coaching
- Speech and Language Therapy (SLT)
- Occupational Therapy (OT)
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)
- Talk Therapy (or psychotherapy)
- Educational Supports / interventions
- Support Group

In St. Mary's, some specific interventions that are used to support children with ADHD include visual schedules, positive praise and encouragement, movement breaks, particular preferred responsibilities/ jobs within the school to allow for purposeful movement, organisational techniques, use of the sensory room, use of the sensory garden, emotional regulation support, extra support in the yard, differentiation of work where appropriate, play therapy, mindfulness , breathing and relaxation techniques , music, art and yoga.

Teacher Tips for Students with ADHD

Students with ADHD need a highly structured and consistent approach in school. The following are some tips for classroom management to help children with ADHD cope with classroom life.

- Always try to sit the student with ADHD in a part of the room with the least number of distractions – up the front, away from doors and windows, in front of you but don't stigmatise the student by isolating them.
- Clear the desk or work area of all items not needed for the designated task at hand.
- Break the task down into steps from start to finish and reward after each stage, no matter how small each stage is
- Allow for physical movement during the steps of completion of task e.g., to get the books from the shelf, etc.
- Talk to the student and try to stoop to their level and use eye contact and gestures.
- Ascertain that you have the child's attention when starting to give oral instruction.
- Encourage the child to use oral footnoting as he repeats the instruction back to you.
- Set limits clearly- children with ADHD find it difficult to quantify time, the use of a small visual clock, stopwatch or egg timers are a useful too.
- Encourage completion of task.
- Find their special or strongest interest and use it to engage the child in other activities e.g., he is good at art- perhaps allow the child to draw what he hears in a history lesson.
- Keep a routine in the room.

- Keep a visual record of Good Behaviour and Good Work. Catch the child being good and reward appropriately.
- Praise the student.
- Find his "Good Time" of the day – perhaps the child is on medication and monitoring is necessary, watch for changes in behaviour throughout the day.
- Provide an atmosphere of acceptance.
- Use of assorted colours, graphics and animation for instruction can prove useful.
- Uses of computer programmes are also useful ADHD children respond well to them and it encourages them to self-monitor.

For older students

- Encourage the student – to write it down, break it down.
- Keep a diary or "to do list."
- Encourage colour coding.
- Set up a workstation away from the desk. Not a removal as a punitive measure.
- Use his watch as a reminder.
- Praise the student.
- Say it, write it and repeat it when giving oral instruction.
- Monitor skills development and build on it.
- Give advance notice of upcoming tasks, e.g., projects and lessons.
- Outline what you expect and how you expect it to be completed.
- Change your tone of voice and pace – keep them interested.
- Encourage them for feed-back to reinforce the given instruction.
- Time out breaks.
- Seat breaks- allow movement in the room.
- Establish a private signal in advance so they know that their behaviour is inappropriate e.g., tapping the desk.
- Use positive language e.g., "Doing great," "You're nearly there."
- Coach the student to completion.
- Re-assure.

The following links to some tips for parents of children with a diagnosis of ADHD.

https://adhdireland.ie/for-parents/

CPD: A number of teachers in St. Mary's have attended workshops specific to ADHD Interventions and Strategies in Lucena.

A Whole School Approach to Dyslexia (a full Dyslexia Policy is attached as *Appendix 25*)

The Dyslexia Association of Ireland defines dyslexia as a specific learning difficulty affecting the acquisition of fluent and accurate reading and spelling skills. This occurs despite access to appropriate learning opportunities. Dyslexia is characterised by cognitive difficulties in (1) phonological processing, (2) working memory, and (3) speed of retrieval of information from long term memory. Dyslexic difficulties occur on a continuum from mild to severe and affect approximately 10% of the population. People with dyslexia may experience greater stress and

frustration as they endeavour to learn, resulting in heightened anxiety, particularly in relation to literacy acquisition. People with dyslexia may also have accompanying learning strengths.

We recognise that some pupils, despite intellectual and other abilities, have unexpected difficulty learning to read and/or to spell and write fluently. These pupils may be described as having dyslexia.

We recognise that some of these pupils have special educational needs; that these needs have to be met to the best of our ability and resources; and that these pupils have the same right of access to the curriculum and to all the activities of the school as all other pupils. We will therefore make the following arrangements to try to ensure that their needs are met.

-CPD: Staff were given a presentation in awareness, diagnosis and interventions related to dyslexia by Dr. Pauline Cogan in December 2017; the SEN team were given a presentation on Dyslexia by Dr. Shane Holland, NEPS in 2018.

- We will operate an early identification and monitoring programme to try to ensure that all pupils who are experiencing difficulties with reading and spelling are identified as early in their school career as possible. Early identification has been identified as hugely advantageous for the following reasons: there is less ground to make up; problems are less complex; there are better educational prospects; near-normal scholastic achievement can be obtained; quality of life of students with dyslexia can be improved; students can gain access to full curriculum; it is more cost-effective in terms of resources/ supports.

Practical tips for the classroom (at a glance):

• Provide handouts. Reduce necessity for taking information from the board.
• Praise the student for asking for help.
• When you ask a question, give the student 'thinking time' to process.
• If the student offers an answer (i.e., put hand up) try not to keep them waiting.
• Ensure sensitivity in correcting errors, focus on the target of that lesson e.g., punctuation/ a particular spelling pattern.
• Praise all effort.
• Draw attention to the aspects of their guess that are correct and help to focus on what the student does know.
• 'Errors' can be seen as hypotheses that lead to learning rather than failure.
• People with dyslexia may have poor short-term memory so limit verbal information and back it up visually. Take a multi-sensory approach as far as possible.
• Give information in small chunks.
• Avoid rote learning.
• Teach strategies to support memory – headings, rehearsal, sequencing.
• Give direct explicit instructions.
• Check readability of texts.
• Use differentiation e.g., only mark target spellings – not all.
• Try teaching spelling using mnemonics.
• Paired reading and peer tutoring can be good.
• If possible, simplify worksheets. Use large print with clear spacing. Ideally paper should be cream/pastel coloured.
• Use Sans serif font and large font size.
• A child with dyslexia will be able to show their knowledge if they tick the correct box rather than write answers.
• Avoid lengthy dictation and copying.
• Encourage proof reading.
• Train student to plan written work using headings and sub-headings ahead of time.

• Try mind mapping.
• Do not ask the student to read aloud. If necessary, the teacher could ask the student to practice a short paragraph at home so they can read it with fluency in front of the other students.
• Highlight difficult words in text.
• Sit the pupil up at the front of the class.
• Check posture/pencil grip etc.
• Give work in manageable amounts.
• A cursive writing style is recommended.
• Ask pupil to survey each task and to think what the pupil has to do before starting.
• See if they can tell you what they have to do.
• Show and allow alternative ways of recording their work, e.g., flow charts, maps, diagrams and/or computers.
• Take a 'Look and Say' approach for spelling and build on frequently used words.

(see Appendix 25 for more in-depth policy on Dyslexia in St. Mary's)

Admission Policy for Pupils with SEN

The Department of Education acknowledges the considerable progress made by schools in developing inclusive practices and provision whereby the vast majority of pupils with special educational needs now attend mainstream schools. It also recognises that a small minority of pupils with significant and enduring needs may require a more specialist setting (for example, special class or special school placement). St. Mary's aims to meet the needs of any child whom the parent wishes to register at the school as long as a place is available, and the admission criteria are fulfilled. The Education for Persons with Disabilities Act 2004 states that 'A child is entitled to attend the school which is most suited to his or her overall needs'. No child will be refused admission to St. Mary's solely on the grounds that he has SEN except where the provision required is incompatible with that available in our school.

The Admission Policy for pupils with SEN is as follows:

- Children with special educational needs are welcome to apply to our school.
- Every effort will be made to provide them with an appropriate education and to include them in every aspect of school life.
- Supports and resources will be put in place in accordance with the level of resources provided by the Department of Education and Science.
- Every effort will be made to secure all available resources.
- The Board of Management will request copies of relevant reports or request that the child be assessed immediately in order to assist the school in establishing the educational needs of the child and to profile the support services required? (check at Board level)
- The school will meet with the parents of the child with special needs to discuss the child's needs and the school's suitability/capability in meeting these needs.
- If necessary, a full case conference may be held which may include Principal, parents, class teacher, SET and/or psychologist and social workers as appropriate.
- The school reserves the right to refuse enrolment to a pupil in exceptional cases.
- Such an exceptional case could arise where either:
  1. The pupil has special needs such that, even with additional resources available from the Department of Education and Science, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the pupil with an appropriate education.
  2. In the opinion of the Board of Management, the pupil poses an unacceptable risk to himself, to other pupils, to school staff or to school property.

● It may be necessary for the BOM to decide to defer enrolment of a particular child pending the provision of appropriate resources (EPSEN Act 2004).
● The Education Act 1998 states that the BOM must ensure that the educational needs of all students must be identified and provided for.
● Under the Disability Bill 2004 schools must ensure to promote equality and social inclusion for all. It is important to promote and foster in school communities an environment that encourages pupils to attend school and to participate fully in school life. (Education Welfare Act 2000)

Communication Strategies

The operation of an effective communication system between all parties involved in meeting the learning needs of the child is considered essential.
The various strands of this system include:

Communication with Class Teachers

- The SENCO and the SEN teachers will have regular informal communication with the class teacher. Timetabled meetings will be held at the beginning of each school year to facilitate a handover between class teachers, SETs and SNAs.
- There will be consultation between class teacher and Special Education Teacher following a low score on a screening test or difficulties in any area of the curriculum.
- A collaborative problem-solving approach is present in our school in relation to particular needs of a child, where the first step is usually a Stage 1 support plan drawn up with input from the SET and class teacher for use in the classroom.

Communication with Parents is promoted by:

- Meeting with the parents of incoming Junior Infant children in June to explain school policies and how parents and teachers can work together for the benefit of pupils
- Informing parents of concerns regarding progress in school as early as possible.
- Outlining the school's practice with regard to standardised and diagnostic testing and follow up procedures (through the use of school website)
- Informing parents of the purpose and procedures of the school's Special Education Team through letter at beginning of school year *Appendix 11*
- Consultation between Principal/ SEN Co and Special Education Teacher and/or class teacher and parents following a low score on a screening test, including the seeking of approval for diagnostic assessment and provision of supplementary teaching.
- Holding meetings with parents of children receiving SEN support at least twice a year to involve them in all stages of the Staged Approach/ Continuum of Support, including reviews.
- Listening to the concerns of parents or teachers and arranging an appointment to discuss and plan.
- Keeping a log of communication with parents, where appropriate.

Communication between SNAs and parents

The following guidelines are in place to provide clarity for SNAs in St. Mary's and consistency in our delivery of information to parents

- SNAs in St. Mary's have a hugely valued role and are encouraged to develop a positive relationship based on trust with the parents of children with SEN. If required at the beginning/ end of the school day, a child's SNA will have a handover with the parent/ caregiver.
- It is helpful to chat about how the day went or upcoming events but information regarding child's educational progress should be passed on by the class teacher/ SET to ensure continuity.
- Parents with questions, requests or concerns regarding school policy or practice should be referred directly to the class teacher or the Principal. This applies to direct face-to-face communication or indirect telephone communication. Parents should contact teachers for information on the child's progress.
- It is at the discretion of SNAs, class teachers and SETS to give a personal contact number to parents where they can contact out of school hours. A Whatsapp group between parents/ guardians and school personnel can be a very useful and practical means of communication.
- If there are any minor incidents, a note on Class Dojo/ Seesaw, can be sent to parents by the class teacher with the input of the SNA. Any major incidents should be reported to the Principal.

Communication with BOM
● The BOM will be kept up to date by the Principal of the SEN provision. SEN will be on the agenda regularly.

Whole-School Collaboration
● SEN issues will appear on the agenda of staff meetings and Post holders' meetings when necessary. The SEN co-ordinator and Principal will be responsible for this process.

Communication with Outside Agencies
● Regular liaison with outside agencies will be maintained by the Principal, SEN co-ordinator and the SEN teachers.

Referral to Outside Agencies

- The Special Education Teacher, Class Teacher, and Principal co-ordinate the referral of pupils to outside agencies, e.g., Educational Psychologist.
- The Principal and/or Special Education Teacher and/or Class Teacher meet with the parents to discuss the need for the referral and to seek consent.
- The class teacher completes the necessary referral form in consultation with the appropriate school personnel.
- External professionals are welcomed to visit the school to meet with the pupil, parents, principal, class teacher and the Special Education Teacher as appropriate. An assessment may be carried out to determine the needs of the child.
- This may be followed by a return visit at which findings of the assessment are discussed, with

parents, Principal and/or Special Education Teacher and/or Class Teacher. Recommendations will be considered and an appropriate action or set of targets and timeframe for implementation will be agreed.

Communication with Principal

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

Record-Keeping

A full record of psychological reports, other reports and records of meetings are kept in the individual student's file in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal's office. All information is managed in accordance with the directives of the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts/ GDPR Legislation.
See St. Mary's Record Keeping Policy/ GDPR Statement for more details.

Exemptions from Irish

Exempting a pupil from the study of Irish should be considered only in exceptional circumstances. The decision to exempt a pupil from the study of Irish is an important decision that has implications for his access to the curriculum and his future learning. The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the principal teacher, but it must be made following detailed discussion with the pupil's parent(s)/guardian(s), the class teacher, special education teachers, and the pupil. A decision to grant an exemption should only be considered in the circumstances set out by the Department of Education.
Our school refers to Circular 0054/ 2022. Exemptions from the Study of Irish *Appendix 22*
This circular succeeds previous circular 52/ 19 which outlined that authority for granting Irish exemptions has now been devolved to management authorities in English speaking primary school. This circular emphasises the value of all children studying Irish, the first language of the state, particularly in the context of the Primary Language Curriculum, which takes an integrated approach to language study and acknowledges that young children adapt and improve their language skills over time.
The Primary Language Curriculum is informed by the benefits of bilingualism and by the principles of inclusion. It is designed as a Curriculum for children of all abilities in all school contexts and supports the provision of a differentiated learning experience for pupils in an inclusive school environment.
This rationale underpins the emphasis on pupils under 12 continuing to study Irish with limited exceptions.
The Circular lists the exceptional reasons where an Exemption from the study of Irish might be considered.
These are outlined in detail in *Circular 0054/ 2019 Appendix 22*

The terms of this Circular will apply with immediate effect from the beginning of the school year 2022/ 2023. The Circular applies to all applications for exemption from the study of Irish for pupils who are currently enrolled in English medium primary schools and to pupils who will enrol in English-medium primary schools in the future. An exemption granted to a pupil may be operative throughout his enrolment in primary and post-primary school.

Procedures outlined in Circular 0054/ 2022 will be followed and documented as outlined in the following document.
https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/28b2b-exemptions-from-the-study-of-irish-primary/

Recording the decision
The outcome of the application process will be conveyed by the school principal in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s). Where an exemption is granted, a Certificate of Exemption, signed and dated by the school principal will be issued. The Certificate of Exemption will also state the name and address of the school, the school roll number, the pupil's name, date of birth and the sub-paragraph under which the exemption is being granted. Parents/guardians and pupils should be informed of the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time. This will also be recorded on Aladdin.

Appeals
Where the application for exemption from the study of Irish is refused, a parent/guardian can appeal the school's decision to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee (IEAC). The deliberations of the IEAC will focus solely on the process the school engaged in reaching its decision. The IEAC will consider how the school followed the process as prescribed in this Circular and the accompanying Guidelines for Primary Schools. An appeal must be lodged within 30 calendar days from the date the decision of the school not to grant an exemption was notified in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s). The Irish Exemptions Appeal Form and Guidelines for Primary Schools can be accessed at www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish-Exemption/.

Arrangements for pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish
Schools, where appropriate, should take account of the literacy learning needs of pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish when deploying available special educational needs resources. To support inclusive practices, a pupil who is exempt from the study of Irish should be included in a meaningful way in aspects of Irish language and cultural activities in line with his ability and interests.

Supports for pupils who have no understanding of English when enrolled (see EAL Policy)
A pupil who has no understanding of English when enrolled and whose education up to 12 years of age or up to the final year of his primary education was received outside the state, should be provided with intensive English as an Additional Language (EAL) in preparation for his full engagement with the Primary Language Curriculum at a level commensurate with his ability.

Reporting on exemptions granted to the Department
The school management will be required to provide statistical information relating to the number and the grounds on which exemptions were granted under this Circular in the previous school year as part of the Primary School Annual Census. As set out above, a copy of the Certificate of Exemption must also be given to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the pupil being exempted.

Pupils transitioning to other schools
It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that a copy of the pupil's Certificate of Exemption is made available to the receiving school.

Data protection
In processing applications schools must comply with data protection law.

Further information can be found at the following website:
www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish-Exemption/.

Priority areas for Development

- Extended use of Aladdin for access to student IEPs, PPPs, Student Support Plans and Learning Targets, assessments, minutes of review meetings.
- Increase awareness of SEN in St. Mary's using the school website/ Aladdin.
- Further collaboration with the IT Postholder to promote the use of ICT and AT for students with additional needs.
- Further development of in-class support as a methodology.
- Further collaboration between class teachers and SETs in identifying SMART targets, planning, implementing, and reviewing strategies.
- Ongoing professional development opportunities for staff in the area of special education in order to continue raising teacher awareness of, and expertise in, differentiated teaching methodologies.
- Increasing parental involvement and collaboration in SEN.
- Developing linkages with local support services such as Rainbows/ CDNT.
- The development of a Wellbeing policy, a Wellbeing Team, and Wellbeing Events in St. Mary's.
- Development of a Nurture Space and a Nurture/ Trauma-Informed approach to Teaching and Learning.
- Increased communication between Early Years, Primary and Post-Primary to ensure continuity.
- Development of an outdoor play area to promote social skills in yard for infants, and gross motor skills for all children.

Communication, Monitoring and Reviewing

This policy will be communicated to staff and the school community as appropriate and will be subject to regular review. In accordance with the systematic cycle of review of policies adopted in St. Mary's BNS, it will be reviewed every three years, unless there is a compelling reason to review it earlier. 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 by monitoring:

● The standards obtained by children with special needs
● The number of children at each of the three stages: Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus
● The level and pattern of help (i.e., average time allocated and the balance of in-class and withdrawal support)
● Views of parents
● Visits from specialist teachers
● Levels of engagement with CPD in SEN
● Children's views through use of 'My Thoughts about School Checklist'

Roles and Responsibilities

Staff Roles & Responsibilities:

The role of learning support is a collaborative responsibility shared by all- The Board of Management, Principal, Special Education Teachers, Class Teachers and Resource Teacher, parents, and children. It is important that everyone contributes to the planning and the implementation of our school plan for Special Educational Needs.

The implementation of our policy will be supported by the Board of Management as follows:

The Board of Management will:

- Oversee the development, implementation and review of the Special Education Policy and special needs services in general.
- Ensure that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the Special Education Teachers.

Role of School 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
- Ensuring 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 school staff (class teachers, special education teachers and special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area
- Maintaining the listing and safe storage of psychological reports on children with special needs and also arranging for the confidential disposal of records when the need arises
- Ensuring that record keeping and communication in relation to SEN is in line with GDPR policy and guidelines
- Assuming overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the Special Education Policy for St. Mary's.
- Working with teachers and parents in the development of the plan
- Monitoring the implementation of the school plan on an on-going basis
- Monitoring the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focussed on the pupils who are most in need
- Assuming direct responsibility for co-ordinating Special Needs services

- Overseeing the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and learning difficulties so that the necessary support can be provided
- Keeping teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed in initiating referrals
- Helping teachers increase their knowledge and skills in the area of Special Educational Needs
- Liaising with external agencies including NEPS
- Keeping the BOM informed on the working of this policy
- Attending meetings with the Special Education Team to monitor and review Special Education
- Signing off on Classroom Support Plans

The Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator

Due to the size of the school, some of the Principal's actions above are delegated to the Special Needs Co-ordinator, Lizzie Houston. The principal retains overall responsibility for the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Role of Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)

In conjunction with the Principal, class teachers, SETs and SNAs, the SENCO in St. Mary's BNS:

- Assumes responsibility for the implementation and review of school policies on SEN on a day-to-day basis
- Maintains the listing of psychological reports on children with special needs and communicates with relevant personnel on the recommendations of reports
- Co-ordinates the caseloads and timetables of SETs, class teachers and SNAs
- Consults with class teachers to discuss support plans for whole class and individual children
- Co-ordinates 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
- Administers/ oversees diagnostic testing where necessary
- Advises parents on procedures for availing of special needs services
- Prepares and applies for supports for children with SEN – access to SNA support, Assistive Technology, specialised equipment/ furniture, and Irish exemptions
- Completes NCSE forms and applications when required and within specific timeframes
- Liaises with parents of children with special needs and with external personnel – psychologists, therapists, SENO etc. and arranges and accommodates meetings when required
- Maintains established links with feeder secondary schools and arranges meetings, handovers and follow up meetings to facilitate the transition of SEN pupils
- Continues to co-ordinate and extend the use of Aladdin to allow shared access among the SETs to Student Support Plans/ IEPs/IPLPs and collaborative progress reviews
- Promotes professional development opportunities in relation to SEN within the Special Education Team, with class teachers and SNAs

- Remains informed of current best practice within the Special Needs area
- Maintains a tracking system to record and track progress of children with SEN on the Continuum of Support – Staged Approach
- Co-ordinates Personal Pupil Plans being devised for children with SNA access, outlining care needs and timetables. Corresponds with SENO where necessary
- Organises interventions such as Play Therapy and Burns by Your Side Reading Project with therapy dog
- Holds regular meetings with the Special Education Team, records minutes of these and communicates these to staff at meetings
- Holds meetings with parents/ teachers/ SNAs where necessary, to discuss issues, co-ordinate timetables/ caseloads/ plan and review
- Ensures effective record-keeping of files relevant to children in receipt of learning support and storing assessments, tests, and IEPs
- Signs off on Classroom Support Plans

The Role of the Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/ her class including those selected for supplementary teaching.

These responsibilities include:

- Creating a classroom environment where learning difficulties can be prevented or at least alleviated by grouping pupils for instruction
- Providing a differentiated approach in the classroom to cater for all needs and learning styles
- Liaising closely with parents; informing parents of the concerns of the school about their child's progress
- Identifying and assessing children with special needs as early as possible
- Consulting with parents to implement the Staged Approach as adopted in our school in order to monitor and review the progress of the child in response to the differentiated approach
- Where possible, attending meetings between learning support teacher and pupil's parents
- Consulting and co-operating with the learning support team on pupil's IPLP
- Being alert to the possibility that some children may have a specific learning difficulty and bringing it to the attention of the learning support teacher
- Working collaboratively with SNAs to outline their duties in order to enhance the progression of children under their care

The Special Education Teacher is responsible for:

- Contributing to the development of Special Education Policy at the whole school level
- Assisting in the implementation of a broad range of whole school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to prevent learning difficulties
- Implementing school procedures, as outlined in this policy, for the selection of pupils for

supplementary teaching

- Developing Individual Profiles and Learning Programmes for pupils who are selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with the class teacher and parents
- Maintaining short-term plans for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of learning support
- Delivering intensive early intervention programmes to pupils in Junior Classes
- Meeting with parents to discuss pupils' progress
- Providing supplementary teaching in English and/or Mathematics to pupils who experience low achievement
- Liaising with class teacher on individual pupil's needs and progress
- Liaising with external agencies, where necessary
- Providing advice to class teachers in such areas as individual pupil assessment and programme planning, as well as approaches to language development, reading, writing, and mathematics for pupils experiencing learning difficulties
- Maintaining a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and special educational needs
- Conducting diagnostic assessment
- Maintaining and reviewing pupil records
- Liaising with Principal, teachers, and parents
- Contributing at the school level to decision-making regarding the purchase of learning resources, books, and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in the mainstream classrooms and in the learning support teachers' rooms
- Attending meetings with the Special Education Team and Principal to monitor and review Special Education

The Role of Parents

- Actively participating in and providing support for their child's learning
- Supporting homework activities
- Collaborating with the Class teacher, Learning Support Teacher, Principal, or outside agencies in creating an IPLP for their child

The Role of Pupils

It is important for the students to have an input into the development, implementation, and review of their own learning. In St. Mary's we encourage pupils to become aware and responsible learners by:

- Implementing a variety of self-assessment strategies wherein they can evaluate their progress and develop their personal strengths
- Actively engage in a variety of teaching styles, learning experiences, and differing levels of outcomes in different learning situations such as groups, pairs, or whole class settings

Special Needs Assistants

St. Mary's greatly values the contribution made by Special Needs Assistants to the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs. Our school currently has an allocation of 7.83 Special

Needs Assistants for 14 children with SNA access as granted by our SENO, Nuala Connell, NCSE (as of September 2023)

Circular No 0035/2022 SNA Allocation is the most recent circular pertaining to SNAs: https://assets.gov.ie/225884/21b9ba96-7577-4e21-8d58-7c28ea974a99.pdf This Circular outlines arrangements for the allocation of SNA support in mainstream classes for the 2022/23 school year. The Circular does not change the role of the SNA, nor does it amend the existing employment terms and conditions of SNAs. This Circular should be read in conjunction with existing SNA Circulars. The role of the SNA continues to be; to support the care needs of students; to assist classroom teachers and special education teachers and to ensure that the student is able to access education, as set out in Section 5 of DES Circular 30/2014

Role of the SNA/ Guidelines Ref Circular 07/02

- Assistance with the development of Personal Pupil Plans for children with special educational needs, with a particular focus on developing a care plan to meet the care needs of the pupil concerned and the review of such plans.
- SNAs are responsible for implementing the Personal Pupil Profile for each child who has access to their support and working collaboratively with class teachers and SETs to best support the care needs of the particular child with a view to creating independence and lessening the need for long-term support.
- Through regular, informal contact with class teachers and SETs, the SNA team are encouraged to become informed and involved in practical ways with the learning programmes designed for pupils with special needs. SNAs are facilitated in training where opportunities arise.
- The SNA may assist other pupils in classroom/ yard with difficulties of an academic, social, behavioural, or emotional nature where required.

Circular 30/14 Appendix 23

“The Special Needs Assistant (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. Such support is provided in order to facilitate the attendance of those pupils at school and also to minimise disruption to class or teaching time for the pupils concerned, or for their peers, and with a view to developing their independent living skills. The Special Needs Assistant scheme has been a key factor in ensuring the successful inclusion of children with special educational needs into mainstream education, and also with providing care support to pupils who are enrolled in special schools and special classes.”

Primary Care Needs

“…examples of the primary care needs which would be considered significant – and which might require SNA support are:

- Assistance with feeding: where a child with special needs requires adult assistance and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time

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

The following tasks are the type of secondary care associated tasks which SNAs will often perform, but only once they have been allocated on the basis of the primary care support tasks listed above.

The indicative list of secondary associated tasks listed below is not definitive and is reflective of the tasks detailed in Circulars 08/02 and 71/2011. The associated support tasks which may be carried out, but which would not in themselves normally constitute a reason for the allocation of SNA support include:

- Preparation and tidying of workspaces and classrooms or assisting a child who is not physically able to perform such tasks to prepare and tidy a workspace, to present materials, to display work, or to transition from one lesson activity to another. To assist with cleaning of materials.
- Assistance with the development of Personal Pupil Plans for children with special educational needs, with a particular focus on developing a care plan to meet the care needs of the pupil concerned and the review of such plans.
- Assist teachers and/or Principal in maintaining a journal or care monitoring system for pupils including details of attendance and care needs. Assist in preparation of school files and materials relating to care and assistance required in class by students with special needs.
- Planning for activities and classes where there may be additional care requirements associated with particular activities, liaising with class teachers and other teachers such as the resource

teacher and school principal, attending meetings with parents, SENO, NEPS Psychologists, or school staff meetings with the agreement and guidance of class teacher/principal

- Assistance with enabling a pupil to access therapy or psycho-educational programmes such as anger management or social skills classes, under the direction of qualified personnel, including class teachers or support teachers.
- Assistance to attend or participate in out of school activities: walks, or visits, where such assistance cannot be provided by teaching staff.

When a pupil with significant and complex care needs has access to support from a SNA the classroom teacher will work closely with the SNA. However, the class teacher continues to have primary responsibility for teaching and learning and for the social and emotional development and progress of the pupil. Though the SNA can provide useful assistance to the teacher in ensuring that the pupil is able to access education, the role of the SNA is not to provide additional tuition, as this is the role of qualified learning support/resource teachers who may assist the teacher to provide additional teaching to pupils with special educational needs.

Students with challenging behaviour need, in the first instance, should be supported by their class teachers, other school staff members, and by whole school polices on the management of behaviour in schools. The responsibility for the overall progress of students with behavioural difficulties lies with the classroom teacher. The emphasis in the school situation should be on the development of well-co-ordinated interventions in response to the child's identified needs. The provision of appropriate teaching and health supports, as required, should result in improved behaviours, leading to improved educational outcomes for children with Emotional Behavioural Disorder (EBD) or Severe Emotional Behavioural Disorder (SEBD). For children who are experiencing behavioural difficulties or who have received a diagnosis which places them in the EBD disability category, it should not be assumed that all children who have some form of emotional behaviour disturbance require access to SNA support or that SNA support is the appropriate intervention in each instance. A range of guidelines are available to support schools in meeting the needs of children with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. These include:

• Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) – A Continuum of Support Guidelines www.education.gov.ie

• DES Information Guides for Primary and Post Primary schools on Supporting Students with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties www.education.gov.ie/

• Guidelines for Developing School Codes of Behaviour www.newb.ie The Information Guides above indicate that behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties can occur on a continuum from mild, transient difficulties to difficulties which are significant and persistent. Thus, responses provided should be incremental, moving from classroom-based interventions to more intensive and individualised interventions. The timing and pace of implementation may vary depending on the level of need and the nature of the presenting problems, with interventions tailored to the individual needs of pupils. Provision of SNA support should therefore not be considered as a first response for management of behaviour. SNA support should only be provided where it is clear that behavioural management strategies have not been successful to date and where it is demonstrated how access to such support can assist with ongoing planning and intervention for the child.

The care role of the SNA, in instances where SNA support is sanctioned to assist with behavioural related care needs, is concerned with assisting the teacher to meet the care needs of the child by: preserving the safety of the pupil and others with whom the pupil is in contact; assisting to ensure the prevention of self-injurious or destructive behaviour; reinforcing good behaviour on the child's part and acting as a positive role model for the child; Assisting with recording data in relation to pupil behaviour and behavioural development. The deployment of all additional supports which are provided to support children with special needs should be linked to personalised planning processes for the pupils for whom the applications are being made. It is important to ensure that the school has a clear plan in place as to how an SNA resource, which is being provided to assist with behavioural difficulties, will be utilised and to set out the timeframe for which this resource is expected to be required. The plan should also demonstrate how the school intends to actively reduce, and, if possible, eliminate dependency on SNA support within a reasonable timeframe and should include time-bound targets for the development of independence skills and for a reduction in behavioural difficulties. SNA support should not be considered as a permanent solution to behavioural problems but as an assistive support to try to improve and adjust behaviours in a managed way over a period of time. All SNA allocations for behavioural purposes will therefore be time bound, being made initially for a maximum period of three years, subject to annual review, and a full reassessment of the child's care needs before the end of the three-year period.

The NCSE is responsible, through its network of local SENOs for allocating SNAs to schools to support children with special educational needs, in accordance with DES criteria, including a requirement to have regard to the overall limit on staffing numbers under the Employment Control Framework. A key feature of the NCSE allocation process is to provide for an annual allocation of SNA support to eligible schools. The NCSE issues a Circular to schools each year requesting that they submit applications for SNA support to the NCSE in respect of applications for such support for the coming school year. Having considered all of the applications received, the NCSE will advise schools of their SNA allocation quantum for the coming school year, taking into account the number of valid applications for SNA support and the assessed care needs of the children concerned. This gives schools certainty as to the resources which will be available to them for the coming school year and allows for school planning to commence as early as possible. Whereas the NCSE will continue to consider applications throughout the school year in cases where schools have enrolled new pupils with care needs, where new assessments have been forthcoming, or in cases of emergencies, the main allocation of SNA support is now made to schools on an annual allocation basis. Full details regarding the NCSE allocation process are available at www.ncse.ie or through the SENO.

Cf Circular to Boards of Management and Principals of National School (30/14 Appendix 23

ICT

ICT is used as a resource for children in St. Mary's who experience problems in accessing the curriculum due to learning difficulties with reading, writing, spelling, or numeracy, visual or hearing problems, emotional or behavioural problems. It is used in the following ways:

- Assistive technology is used for pupils who are experiencing difficulties with literacy or producing written work due to physical disability. Word processing software can be used to assist such pupils e.g., Clicker 7, Type to Learn.

- Where a recommendation has been given by a psychologist or Occupational Therapist, the school will apply for assistive technology from NCSE.
- Pupils with vision problems can be helped through the use of different coloured screens and fonts; icons and screen menus can be enlarged to suit.
- For those with co-ordination difficulties, a tracker mouse/ rollerball mouse can be used to introduce the concept of mouse-clicking.
- Software programs such as Wordshark, Numbershark, Accelerated Reading and Type to Learn come with facilities whereby teachers can set different levels for each pupil. This is especially useful for those with learning difficulties. Not only does it mean they are using the same program as their peers, but it means they can set themselves targets to work towards. They can be used regularly for reinforcement as often as a child needs to grasp the concept.
- Using the computer with pupils who have emotional or behavioural difficulties can allow them to have periods in a non-threatening environment where they are likely to be more motivated and less likely to 'fail.' They can also be used as an effective reward for desired behaviour and an alternative method of producing work.
- Reading software may be used as a tool for Specific Learning Needs. They are designed to support classroom instruction by providing children with individualized independent practice with basic reading skills.
- Starspell can be used for children who are experiencing difficulties in spelling.
- Children with fine motor skills may have access to an iPad for tracing and dexterity skill development.
- All resource rooms have interactive smart televisions installed which allow children to access software and programs suitable for their level of need.
- Our SEN team has a total of 10 iPads

Resources:

A list of resources and useful links is available to view in Appendix 24 This will be added to each year.

Therapy Dog

Play therapy

Nurture Room underway in the lightwell between Room 4 and 5.

S.P.H.E. and Wellbeing:

Our S.P.H.E. programme aims to assist in the successful integration of the special needs pupil into our school community. (cf. SPHE Policy)
Our RSE policy takes cognisance of the maturity level of our pupils and Special Needs with regard to sensitive topics (cf. RSE Policy)
Children with special needs will be taught/ retaught the Stay Safe Programme separately where necessary. Weaving Wellbeing, Fun Friends and Friends for Life are programmes that are used to complement the wellbeing and SPHE curriculum in our school, in small social skills group as well as whole class settings. Our school hosted a Wellbeing Week in 2023 which promoted the health and wellbeing of the children and staff in our school.

Code of Behaviour:

In St. Mary's we have taken considerations in relation to the Code of Behaviour where students with special needs are concerned.

At the start of the school year, an IEP (Individual Education Plan) will be drawn up for each resource child. This plan will be drawn up by the class teacher, resource teacher, parents, and where relevant the child's SNA.

Recommendations from Psychological reports (where available to the school) will form an integral part of this plan.

This plan will be reviewed regularly by the class teacher, resource teacher, parents and where relevant by the child's SNA.

Every effort will be made to have a child with social, emotional and/or behavioural needs referred for psychological assessment without delay. Help will be sought, also, from support services within the wider community.

Teachers should take particular care that they help the student with special needs to understand clearly any sanction being imposed and the reason their behaviour is unacceptable.

For some students, visual prompts or pictures may be needed. Some students may need opportunities to practise observing the rules, with feedback on their progress.

Teachers should keep children with special needs in mind when doing circle time, drama, SPHE and other topics dealing with a behavioural theme.

The school and classroom practices that support good learning behaviour are valid for all students, including those with identified special educational needs.

(cf. Code of Behaviour- Children with Special Needs)

Equality of access and participation

In St. Mary's we aim to make provisions so that pupils with special needs have equality of access and participation, i.e., access to all areas of the curriculum - PE, swimming, extracurricular activities, school excursions. Our school has taken part in wheelchair basketball and hurling competitions in the past. The building is wheelchair accessible.
(Cf Epsen Act 2002)

Staff Development and Training:

Special Education Teachers, class teachers and SNAs are encouraged to avail of courses run by SESS, NEPS, Enable Ireland, Treetops, St. Michael's House, Lucena/ CAMHS and other relevant agencies.
Our Psychologist from NEPS may be invited to deliver staff training as part of the Croke Park hours.
All teachers and SNAs completed a 5-day Professional Development training course in Autism provided by Middletown Centre for Autism in 2018.
A number of teachers have completed the TEACCH 2-day course.
The SEN team took part in Attention Autism training in 2019 provided by Middletown Centre for Autism. All teachers and SNAs attended a Dyslexia workshop provided by Educational Psychologist, Dr. Pauline Cogan in 2017. Three teachers are certified to facilitate the Fun Friends/ Friends for Life programme. All SNAs took part in an OT workshop in February on Sensory Processing and practical strategies for the sensory room. A number of SNAs completed the National SNA Training Programme

course over ten months in 2021 and were awarded certificates in inclusive school support. This was delivered by NCSE and UCD.
Teachers may avail of summer courses in the area of Special Education and are encouraged to share relevant resources and ideas with staff.

Success Criteria

The school-wide implementation of this policy will result in enhancement of pupil learning in the following ways:

- Improved standards of academic, social, emotional, and behavioural achievement as outlined in the pupils' Individual Education Plans/ IPLPs
- The use of specific targets and assessment results to inform the level of support being provided to children
- School-wide use of the Staged Approach where necessary as a means of early identification of needs and provision of support
- A collaborative approach to addressing the child's needs allowing for enhanced parental involvement
- Increased opportunities for effective communication between school personnel in relation to pupils' progress

Implementation, monitoring, and review

The implementation of this policy will commence in September 2023. It will be reviewed in February 2026 and every third school year thereafter, or as circumstances may warrant.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Mary's B.N.S. in October 2023. A copy of the policy will be made available to teachers, parents of Special Educational Needs pupils and other parents on request.

Ratified by Board of Management on _____ 2023.

Signed _____

(Mr. John Hughes, Chairperson of the Board of Management)