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Introduction

This policy on Special Educational Needs was reviewed and updated in February 2024 and developed to incorporate Inclusive Practice. This policy reflects our commitment to the principles of DEIS, inclusivity, respect for diversity including neurodiversity, and the right to education for every child.

The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, SNAs, parents/guardians and the school community on the provision of effective support to pupils with special educational needs.

The policy was prepared in line with and with reference to the following:

- [Supporting Pupils and Students with Special Educational Needs – Guidelines for Schools \(DE 2020\)](#)
- [Guidelines for Primary School Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs \(DE 2017\)](#)
- [Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support: Guidelines for Teachers & Resources Pack for Teachers](#)
- [Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools: Supporting Children and Young People \(DE 2023\)](#)
- [Behavioural, Emotional & Social Difficulties: A Continuum of Support – Guidelines for Teachers](#)
- [Circular 02/05](#)
- [Circular no. 0013/2017](#)
- [Circular 20/2022](#)
- [Inclusive Education Framework \(DE 2011\)](#)
- [Learning-Support Guidelines \(DE 2000\)](#)
- [Sensory Spaces in Schools \(NCSE 2021\)](#)
- [Information Booklet for Parents of Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs \(NCSE 2019\)](#)
- [Together Towards Inclusion Toolkit \(NCCA 2007\).](#)

Additionally, this policy was prepared to fulfil our obligations under the following acts.

- [Education Act 1998](#)
- [Education Welfare Act \(2000\)](#)
- [The Equality Status Act \(2000\)](#)
- [Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act \(EPSEN\) 2004,](#)
- [Disability Act \(2005\)](#)

Relationship to School Ethos

In the Assumption JNS, we aim to provide a structured, caring, happy and secure environment, where each child is encouraged to develop their full potential intellectually, spiritually, physically, morally and culturally. We nurture readiness to learn, and this policy is underpinned by principle of regulation before expectation. This is achieved through friendly and co-operative relationships between pupils, parents, staff, and management. Our school adopts a holistic approach to the education of each child and to the enhancement of teaching and learning processes. Diversity is recognised and celebrated. Respect for plurality of faiths and beliefs is seen as integral to the daily routine of the school.

Aims

By implementing this policy, the Assumption JNS aims to:

- Ensure that those with the 'highest level of need have access to the greatest level of support'.
(*Guidelines for Primary School Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs DE 2017*)



- Optimise the learning and teaching process to enable pupils with special educational needs to realise their potential.
- Enhance class-based learning and early interventions.
- Enable pupils with special educational needs to participate in all areas of the curriculum.
- Develop in pupils positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning.
- Promote collaboration between all staff members so that a whole school approach to support teaching can be delivered effectively.
- Ensure that the Continuum of Support is implemented. (NEPS, National Educational Psychological Service)
- Ensure readiness to learn is the starting point for all special educational teaching.
- Involve parents in supporting their child's learning.
- Empower pupils to monitor their own learning and work towards becoming independent learners.

The Continuum of Support and Selection of Pupils for Supplementary Teaching

In the allocation of places for support teaching we follow the Guidelines for Primary School Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs (DE 2017). We use the guidelines to help us identify pupils for supplementary teaching support. In identifying pupils for support, we consider the following:

- Pupils who are identified as having significant special educational needs through a process of ongoing assessment and intervention as set out in the Continuum of Support document, for example, pupils with significant learning, behavioural, emotional, physical, and sensory needs. This will be evidenced through school-based assessments of attainment, and behavioural, social, and emotional functioning and ongoing monitoring of learning outcomes. We will also consider needs as set out in professional reports, where available.
- Pupils who are identified with mild or transient educational needs, including those associated with speech and language difficulties, social or emotional problems, and co-ordination or attention control difficulties.
- Pupils who have diagnosed specific learning disabilities, including dyslexia, DCD, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder etc.
- Pupils presenting with difficulties in literacy and/or numeracy, including difficulties that present a barrier to learning and full access to the curriculum. Standardised tests will be used to screen and identify pupils' performance in reading and mathematics. Those pupils performing below the 10th percentile will be prioritised for support in literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils who were previously in receipt of supplementary teaching from a support teacher and who continue to experience significant learning difficulties.
- Pupils who have additional literacy or language learning needs including those pupils who need English as an Additional Language Support.
- The intensity of supplementary support that is provided for pupils with low achievement and pupils with special educational needs will be based on their needs and will be provided differentially through the continuum of support process.
- Due consideration will be also given to the overall needs of the school and all of its pupils.



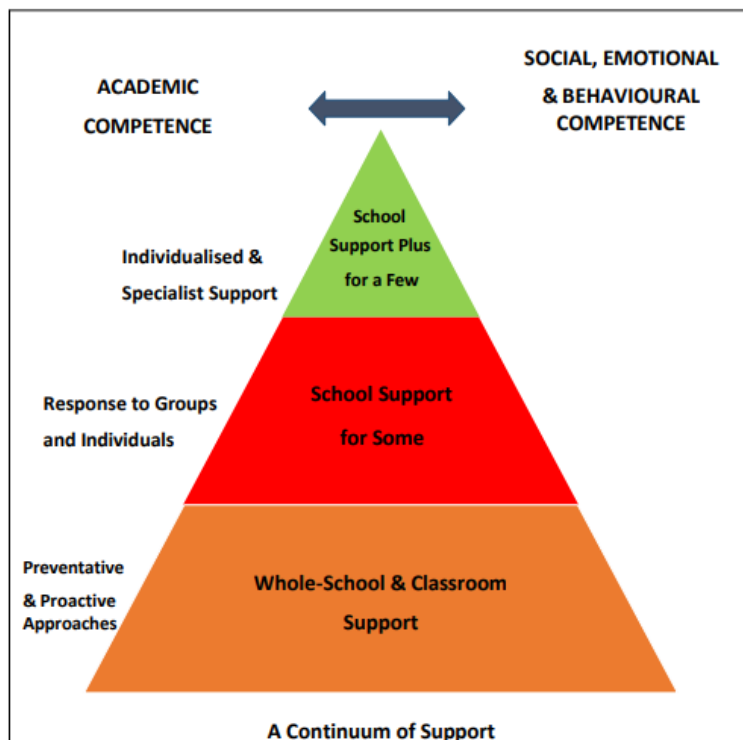
After consultation with the class teacher regarding a pupil considered in need of supplementary teaching, the SET team will carry out classroom observations and administer initial diagnostic assessments to:

- Identify areas where pupils have strengths and weaknesses.
- Gather information useful to the drawing up of a School Support Plan for the pupil.
- Identify the specific needs of the pupil and the appropriate level and type of support needed.

The administration of these tests is in keeping with the staged approach recommended in Appendix 3 of Circular 02/05, together with current guidelines (2017), and DE circulars. The diagnostic assessment used will be appropriate to the pupil’s stage of development.

Levels of Support

Support will be provided to pupils identified as being in one of the three levels of support as detailed in Continuum of Support, Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus.



Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support: Guidelines for Teachers & Resources Pack for Teachers

Classroom Support

Classroom Support is the most common, and typically the first response to emerging needs. It is a response for pupils who have distinct or individual educational needs and who require approaches to learning and/or behaviour which are additional to or different from those required by their peers. Problem solving at this level typically begins when a parent or teacher has concerns about an individual pupil. The teacher and parents discuss the nature of the problem and consider strategies which may be effective. Classroom Support incorporates the simple, informal problem-solving approaches commonly used by class teachers to support emerging needs.

A pupil receiving support within their classroom would be considered to be at stage 1 in terms of the "Staged Approach to Assessment, Identification and Programme Planning" (DES Special Education Circular 02/05)



School Support

In some cases, interventions at classroom support level are not enough to fully meet the pupil's special educational needs. School Support may, therefore, be required. The special education teacher is involved in the problem-solving process at this point taking part in more systematic gathering of information and the development and monitoring of a School Support Plan. A pupil receiving mostly group support or occasional individual support in addition to classroom support would be considered to be at stage 2 in terms of the Staged Approach.

School Support Plus

If a pupil's special educational needs are severe and/or persistent, they are likely to need intensive support. School Support Plus will generally involve personnel outside the school in the problem solving, assessment and intervention process. However, the information from Classroom and School Support work will provide the starting point for problem-solving at this level. Classroom support and school support will continue to be an important element of the pupil's support plan. A pupil receiving more intensive teaching support, including more focused small group work or individual teaching, is considered to be at stage 3 in terms of the staged approach.

(Special Educational Needs: A continuum of Support: Guidelines for Teachers & Resources Pack for Teachers)

Continuum of Support: A 3-Step Process

We use the *Continuum of Support* three-step process as detailed in the 2010 guidelines to support pupils with special educational needs.

- *Step 1: Identify Needs*

Identification: Using the Continuum of Support Framework, we identify pupils' educational needs, to include academic, social, and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties.

- *Step 2: Meeting Needs*

This step focuses on the importance of effective teaching and learning strategies and the benefits of early intervention and prevention programmes.

- *Step 3: Monitoring and Recording Progress*

Pupils' progress is regularly monitored. Progress is informed by effective measurement of baseline performance, including the use of criterion-referenced tests and other methods of assessment (for example, teacher-designed tests, checklists, samples of work, observation) that allow pupils to demonstrate their progress.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Management

- Oversees the development, implementation, and review of the Assumption JNS Special Educational Needs and Inclusive Practice School Policy.
- Ensures adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are available to the special education teachers.
- Provides secure facilities for the storage of records relating to the pupils receiving learning support.



The School Principal

- Has overall responsibility for the school's support programme and for developing inclusive whole-school policies on special needs in co-operation with the class teachers and special education teachers.
- Monitors the implementation of the school's support programme on an on-going basis.
- Oversees the implementation of a whole school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils who need support.
- Keeps teachers informed about services available from outside agencies and how best to avail of them.
- Arranges for the provision of special education teaching funding and resources.
- Facilitates the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to the education of pupils with special educational needs.
- Identifies a teacher/s to co-ordinate special education teaching services and programmes.
- Encourages parental involvement in the support process with assistance from the class teachers and special education teachers.

The Class Teacher

- Is responsible for educating all pupils in their class, including any pupil with special educational needs.
- Has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all pupils in their classroom, including pupils with special educational needs.
- Has the responsibility of ensuring that each pupil is taught in a stimulating and supportive classroom environment where all pupils feel valued.
- Will provide a classroom environment where pupils with differing learning needs can experience success at learning.
- Has a central role in identifying and responding to pupils with special educational needs including differentiating the curriculum as appropriate. These responses will be informed and assisted by collaboration with colleagues, parents/guardians, and others such as the school's NEPS psychologist, the Special Educational Needs Organiser, and outside professionals, and will be in line with the *Continuum of Support*. Strategies such as differentiating groups, adapting learning outcomes for lower and higher achieving pupils, modifying presentation, and questioning techniques, placing emphasis on oral language development across all areas of the curriculum, and providing learning materials and activities that are suitably challenging while endeavouring to ensure success and progress.
- Develops a support plan for those pupils who do not make adequate progress with the support of the whole-class programme to include completion of a Basic Needs Checklist, Learning Environment Checklist, and pupil consultation – My Thoughts about School Checklist. (see Continuum of Support)
- Will inform parents of any concerns regarding their child's learning and give regular updates on progress.
- Will collaborate with the special education teacher in the development, implementation, and review of Classroom and School Support Plans in relation to pupils in their class.
- Will adjust classroom programmes in line with the learning targets and activities listed in the School Support Plans.



The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

- Takes responsibility for formulating and updating the school's Special Educational Needs and Inclusive Practice policy.
- Collaborates with the principal teacher and meets with them at least once a term to discuss issues relating to the development and implementation of the school policy and to the provision of special educational teaching.
- Identifies the level of support that is needed to meet the pupil's needs, in collaboration with the principal, class teacher, SNA (where appropriate), special education teacher and parents.
- Assists the principal in co-ordinating the caseloads of the special education teachers when requested.
- Oversees the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and learning needs so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need.
- Consults with class teachers on the identification of pupils who may need diagnostic assessment.
- Keeps teachers informed about external assessment services that are available and the procedures to follow for initial referrals, when requested.
- Orders standardised assessment scripts each year.
- Maintains the results of standardised assessments each year and shares the results with the principal teacher.
- Advises class teachers and special education teachers about support plans, when requested.
- Maintains a list/register of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching at each stage of the Continuum of Support: Classroom Support, School Support or School Support Plus.

The Special Education Teacher

- Consults and collaborates with the principal, class teacher, SNA, parents, the school's NEPS psychologist, SENO and outside professionals on the most effective way forward for pupils with special educational needs.
- Assists with the implementation of a broad range of whole-school strategies designed to enhance early learning and prevent learning difficulties.
- Assists the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator in co-ordinating the implementation of whole-school screening procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching.
- Carries out comprehensive diagnostic testing of those pupils identified with experiencing low achievement, informs class teachers and parents of the outcomes and records these on the relevant support plans.
- Provides supplementary teaching and in-class support.
- Develops a School Support Plan for each pupil selected for supplementary teaching in collaboration with the class teacher, SNA, the pupil (where appropriate) and parents.
- Maintains short-term planning for each group or pupil receiving supplementary teaching.
- Reviews the progress made by pupils receiving supplementary teaching twice a year and records this on relevant School Support Plans.
- Collaborates with school colleagues in developing a School Support Plus Plan for any pupil who requires more intensive intervention. This may follow consultation with a psychologist, principal, class teacher and parents.



The Pupil

We recognise the importance of the pupil's voice/agency in the provision of special educational support.

The class teachers, SNAs and special educational teaching team work collaboratively to

- Gain a shared understanding of the difficulties a pupil may be experiencing.
- Set clear, realistic, and achievable goals so that the pupil experiences a sense of achievement.
- Help pupils to understand their own learning by asking questions like: What can I do to help you? What does it feel like when you're reading?
- Encourage pupils to take ownership of their own learning – making it real and memorable.
- Enable pupils to engage in self-assessment.
- Empower pupils to make choices and decisions in relation to their own learning.
- Support pupils in recognising and appreciating their own needs and strengths.
- Help pupils to take on a responsibility for their achievements and work hard to succeed.

External Agencies, Professionals and Bodies

- Support and guidance are available to teachers from external professionals such as NEPS Psychologists, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), the NCSE Support Service, the Inspectorate, and allied health professionals such as occupational therapists, speech and language therapists etc.
- The school has established procedures for liaising with these services and bodies to optimise the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs at the individual, group, or whole-school level.
- The needs of many pupils span both health and education services. Health services (HSE and HSE-funded services) will continue to play an important role in early identification, assessment and diagnosis, intervention, and review for pupils with special educational needs.
- The school is familiar with the range of health services in our locality, including referral pathways.
- The school will endeavour to incorporate relevant recommendations from health professionals in developing support plans at each level of the *Continuum of Support*.

The Special Needs Assistant

The role of the Special Needs Assistant is to provide schools with additional support in assisting pupils with special educational needs who also have additional and significant care needs.

(Circular 07/02, Circular 0030/2014)

Role of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) - Primary Care Needs

- Assistance with feeding, where a pupil with special needs requires adult assistance and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time.
- Administration of medicine, where a pupil 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 pupil 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 pupil or pupils to access the school, the classroom or school transport.



- 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.
- Non-nursing care needs associated with specific medical conditions such as frequent epileptic seizures or for pupils who have fragile health.
- 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 pupil may be required to leave the class for medical reasons or due to distress on a frequent basis.
- Assistance with moving and lifting of pupils and 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.

Role of the SNA - Secondary Care Needs

The following tasks are the type of secondary care associated tasks which SNAs will often perform, but only once they have been allocated based on the primary care support tasks listed above. The secondary care associated tasks listed below are not definitive and are 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 pupil 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.
- Assistance with cleaning of materials.
- Assistance with the development of Personal Pupil Care Plans for pupils 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 the school 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 and/or NEPS Psychologists, or school staff meetings with the agreement and guidance of the 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, including walks or visits, where such assistance cannot be provided by teaching staff.



Enrolment of Children with Identified Special Educational Needs

- Each child with special educational needs is welcomed to our school and educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have special educational needs where this serves the best interests of all pupils involved as per the EPSEN Act 2004.
- Prior to a child's enrolment, the relevant school staff will familiarise themselves with the child's particular needs by requesting copies of reports, assessments, etc. from parents.
- A meeting with parents, the principal and relevant teaching staff will take place. The SENO, NEPS psychologist and other agencies will be consulted, where appropriate.
- A collaborative decision will be made as to what level of support the pupil will need on arrival e.g., Classroom Support, School Support or School Support Plus level. This decision will be reviewed as the need arises and as the child settles in school.
- To support the transition to our school the following will happen as required:
 - Parental visit/s to the school.
 - Pupil visit/s to school.
 - School staff visits to preschool/previous educational setting.
 - Liaison with SENO to arrange additional resources where necessary e.g., mobility supports etc.

Preventative, Proactive and Early Intervention Approaches and Strategies

- As mentioned above, the principal and SENCO meet the parents of incoming pupils who have shared information on their child's enrolment form which may indicate special educational needs. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss the pupil's interests, strengths and needs and with a view to facilitating the smoothest transition possible from preschool/school to the Assumption JNS.
- With parental permission, the SET team liaise with preschools/schools with a view to getting relevant supports in place and facilitating the smoothest transition to the Assumption JNS.
- The class teacher and members of the SET team meet each prospective Junior Infant pupil and their parents in the summer term preceding the September they start school to welcome the pupils to our school and to help identify possible special educational needs in the pupils.
- Where possible, the SET team and class teacher make a short introductory video for incoming pupils who may need this level of support with the transition to our school. These videos help the pupil to become familiar with the adults who will work with them. Where appropriate, social stories are also used to support the transition to our school in collaboration with the previous school setting/ preschool.
- The SET team spend the first two weeks in September in the new Junior Infant classes to facilitate assessment and early identification of pupils who may have special educational needs.
- Early School Checklists, as devised by NEPS, are used with Junior Infants and in consultation with the parents to highlight pupils who may need additional support.

Further Early Intervention Approaches and Strategies

- Development of agreed approaches to language development and to teaching other aspects of English and Mathematics to ensure progression and continuity from class to class.
- Formal and informal parent/teacher meetings.
- Implementation of a whole-school parent involvement programme that focuses on developing



a pupil's oral language skills, sharing books with pupils, and developing their early mathematical skills.

- Explicit teaching of phonological and phonemic awareness skills before the introduction of formal reading.
- The use of concrete materials at every opportunity.
- Ongoing structured observation and assessment of the language, literacy, and numeracy skills of pupils in the infant classes to facilitate early identification of special educational needs.
- Close collaboration and consultation between the infant teachers and the support teachers.
- Where possible, provision of additional support in language development and in relevant early literacy and mathematical skills to pupils who need it.
- Differentiated reading schemes e.g., levelled readers to facilitate pupils progressing at their own pace.
- Daily reading for homework in all classes.

Parental Involvement

As described in the Primary Language Curriculum (2019), we recognise that the homes and communities of children play a key role in their learning, which is developed through meaningful interactions with parents, guardians and extended family and friends.

- Parents are encouraged to talk to their children about their day in school and to ask them specific questions about the activities they have done in school.
- Parents are encouraged to read with their child/hear reading on a daily basis.
- The school's approach to the school curriculum is explained at parent-teacher meetings and at meetings for the parents of new pupils in the month of June prior to their child beginning school. Parents are also invited to orientation meetings during the month of September, where they can ask questions and where teachers share information about curricular approaches.
- Parents are supported through regular communication between school and home via homework, which lets parents know what their children are learning about in school.
- Parents are asked to sign their child's reading log and to comment on progress. We encourage parents to engage with their child in rating the book they are reading using a smiley system, and to give reasons for their rating. We provide examples of questions that parents can use with their children to facilitate discussion, to check and to develop comprehension skills.
- Parents support their child's reading through paired reading, shared reading, reading print in their environment, ICT programmes, homework (hearing and talking about reading) and attending the local library, book fairs and World Book Day events.
- Parents are encouraged to assist in the development of their child's writing by offering them frequent, meaningful, and enjoyable opportunities to write, such as giving their child the opportunity to engage in social writing activities e.g., birthday cards, shopping lists etc., and by playing games that improve hand/wrist strength and fine motor skills e.g., Play-Doh, jewellery/model-making kits, cutting/pasting activities, Lego etc.
- Parents are encouraged to assist in the development of their child's mathematical ability by giving them opportunities to engage with day-to-day problem-solving activities. Class teachers guide parents in these activities by providing suggested questioning and also opportunities to visit their child's classroom to take part in mathematics activities.



- Parents are encouraged to use ICT to support learning through the use of technology. Links to suitable websites are shared with parents and, where appropriate, logins are set up for children e.g., Epic Digital Library.
- Parents of children with special educational needs are supported through frequent home/school communication with the class teacher and the special education teacher.
- As a DEIS school, our HSCL Coordinator (a teacher in our school) works in inclusive partnership with parents, teachers, and local community organisations to support positive educational outcomes for pupils. The HSCL Coordinator also works closely with the other two strands of TESS/Tusla, Educational Welfare Officers (EWO) and personnel from the School Completion Programme to improve educational outcomes for children. As part of their work, the HSCL Coordinator will meet parents during home visits. The HSCL Coordinator organises courses for parents in our school as well as events at each class level, where parents are invited to visit their child's classroom to take part in activities. Our HSCL Coordinator is available to parents to give advice, information, or support.

Strategies to Support Learning

Strategies to ensure continuity and progression between classes:

- Graded/levelled reading schemes used.
- Record keeping of pupils' reading levels by the class teacher.
- Formal handover documents which are completed in the third term and retained by the school principal for distribution the following September to the relevant teacher.

Progression in reading will be supported by the following word identification strategies:

- Blending
- Sight words
- Chunking
- Isolating words
- Reading on
- Re-reading
- Use of contextual clues including picture cues

Independent reading will be developed through the following strategies:

- Creation of a print rich environment
- Display of children's written work
- Regular small group/individual reading with the class teacher/SET team

Progression in numeracy will be supported by:

- Use of manipulatives, concrete materials and maths games at each class level.
- The use of *Ready Set Go* mathematics programme in the Infant classes. ([Ready Set Go Maths](#))
- Use of *Mata sa Rang* in the 1st and 2nd classes.
- An emphasis on oral and mental maths.
- An emphasis on "Maths All Around Us", e.g., activities like Maths Trails, integrating maths with other curricular areas etc.
- Yearly Maths Week celebration in the first term of the school year.



Other methodologies/ strategies:

- Aistear
- Jolly Phonics Programme will be taught in Junior and Senior Classes.
- [A Balanced Approach to Literacy Development in the Early Years \(NEPS 2016\)](#)
- [Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers \(NEPS 2019\)](#)
- First Steps Writing Strategies
- Building Bridges of Understanding comprehension strategies.
- Talk Time - [Supporting Talk Time Classroom Strategies](#)
- Where possible, Junior Infant and Senior Infant class teachers and the learning support teachers will work together using the station teaching model to teach literacy and numeracy.
- Starlight Programme will be taught in First Class.

Assessment and Reporting

The following tests will be carried out in our school to help identify pupils experiencing learning difficulties.

- *Belfield Infant Assessment Profile (B.I.A.P.)* (administered in the second term to those Junior Infant pupils whose progress gives cause for concern).
- *Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST)* (administered to all Senior Infant pupils in the second term).
- *The New Drumcondra Primary Reading Test* (administered to all 1st Class and 2nd Class pupils in May).
- *The New Drumcondra Primary Mathematics Test* (administered to 1st Class and 2nd Class pupils in May)
- *The Drumcondra Primary Spelling Test* (administered to all 1st Class and 2nd Class pupils in May)
- *NNRIT New Non-Reading Intelligence Test* (administered to all 1st pupils in the 1st week of October)

The results of all tests are placed securely within the standardised tests section on Aladdin.

Diagnostic assessments currently used:

- High Frequency Word Lists based on levelled readers and common words used in early writing. (Junior and Senior Infants)
- Dolch List (1st and 2nd class)
- Quest Reading
- Quest Numeracy
- Basic Number Diagnostic Test (Gillham)
- NNRIT – New Non-Reading Intelligence Test

Allocation of Places for Supplementary Teaching (Further Information)

- Pupils previously in receipt of support who experience significant learning difficulties.
- Pupils previously in receipt of support who continue to experience significant learning difficulties (scoring below the 12th percentile on standardised assessments).
- Pupils diagnosed as having "Low Incidence Learning Disabilities".
- Pupils diagnosed as having "High Incidence Learning Disabilities".



- Pupils who require support with English as an Additional Language (EAL).
- Pupils scoring at/below the 10th percentile on standardised assessments in literacy.
- Pupils scoring at/below the 12th percentile on standardised assessments in literacy (to allow for a margin of error).
- Pupils scoring at/below the 10th percentile on standardised assessments in mathematics.
- Pupils scoring at/below the 12th percentile on standardised assessments in mathematics (to allow for a margin of error).
- Early intervention in literacy: infant class pupils who continue to experience difficulties in early literacy skills, despite interventions made by the class teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support. The class teacher will have opened a Classroom Support Plan and recorded interventions in it.
- Early intervention in mathematics: infant class pupils who continue to experience difficulties in early numeracy skills, despite interventions made by the class teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support. The class teacher will have opened a Classroom Support Plan and recorded interventions in it.
- Pupils scoring at or below STEN 4 (30th percentile) on standardised assessments in literacy, who continue to experience difficulty, despite interventions made by the class teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support.
- Pupils scoring at or below STEN 4 (30th percentile) on standardised assessments in mathematics, who continue to experience difficulty, despite interventions made by the class teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support.
- Pupils experiencing serious difficulties with oral language/social interaction/behaviour/emotional development/application to learning, despite interventions made by the class teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support.
- Gifted pupils (those scoring above the 95th percentile in both English and Mathematics on standardised assessments), where capacity allows and where the special educational needs of pupils listed above are met first. Interventions will be made in the first instance by the class teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support.

Provision of Supplementary Teaching

- The primary work of the SET team is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils identified in screening and diagnostic testing.
- This takes the form of small group direct teaching, one-to-one teaching, and in-class support where appropriate.
- The school year is divided into two instructional terms – October to the end of February and March to September.
- Deadlines for the completion of support Plans, including where appropriate, meetings with parents, are at the end of October and March each year.
- At the end of an instructional term, the learning outcomes in each pupil's support plan will be reviewed.
- Progress will be measured in the attainment of learning outcomes and this will aid the decision as to whether the pupil should continue to receive supplementary teaching. The class teacher, principal, special education teacher and parents will all be involved in reaching this decision.
- A system of withdrawal and/or in-class support will operate in response to the needs of the pupil.



- In consultation with the school principal, the class teacher and the SET team decide the most beneficial size of groups, taking into account the individual needs of pupils and the overall caseload.
- One-to-one teaching may be provided, where small group teaching has not been effective and caseload permits.
- Parental consent will be requested and recorded on Aladdin before any supplementary teaching begins.
- During the weeks when supplementary teaching is not being carried out, the special education teacher is involved in screening testing, diagnostic testing and in the development and review of support plans, including meeting with the principal, class teachers and parents.

Monitoring Progress

- Ongoing, structured observation and assessment in relation to short-term learning outcomes listed in support plans is used to ensure class and supplementary teaching respond to pupils' needs.
- Pupils are tested at the end of the instructional term.
- A review of learning outcomes and activities listed in a pupil's support plan is carried out.
- Test results are kept and will be stored securely.

Liaising with Parents and Other Agencies

- The class teacher makes initial contact with the parent regarding concerns about their child's progress.
- Parents are invited to a consultation meeting to develop/review a support plan by the class teacher.
- Suggested activities for home, as per the pupil's School Support Plan, are explained to parents by the class teacher and the special education teacher.
- School Support Plans are sent home for parents to read. Parental consent for supplementary teaching support is requested and accepted on Aladdin.
- If the intervention procedures outlined in Stages 1 and 2 of Appendix 3 of Circular 02/05 fail to deliver adequate improvement, the class teacher, in consultation with the principal, may contact the parents for permission for an assessment from a specialist from an outside agency, e.g., psychologist, speech and language therapist, audiologist, occupational therapist or physiotherapist. The principal will facilitate, where appropriate, by arranging appointments with the NEPS psychologist.

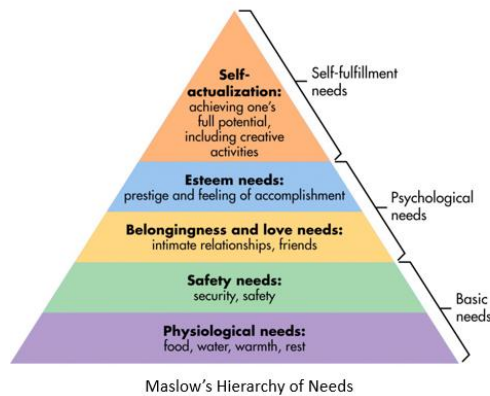
Inclusive Practice

We view inclusion as a right and value meaningful inclusion. We endeavour to provide a flexible, inclusive education for all pupils, where mutually beneficial, and regardless of gender, cultural background, attainment level or special educational needs. Our school practice in inclusion is guided by the [Inclusive Education Framework \(2011\)](#) (NCSE, 2011), the Education Act (DE 1998) and the [Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools: Supporting Children and Young People \(DE 2023\)](#). We use the [Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools: Indicators of Effective Practice \(DE 2023\)](#) to support reflection on our inclusive practice.



Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Our Mainstream Classes

- Teachers support pupils’ learning by ensuring the participation of all pupils in activities, through an acknowledgement of a variety of pupil learning styles, collaboration with the SET team, differentiation of activities, differentiation of questioning, differentiation of expectations, provision of visual aids (e.g., visual schedules, and other visual supports), effective use of SNA support and the use of ICT. All children are enabled to contribute.
- All pupils take part in whole-school activities and the curriculum is adapted as suits their needs.
- Pupils sit in mixed ability groups and have the opportunity to participate in all curricular areas, differentiated by task, questioning, outcome and extension.
- The principle of ‘Regulation before Expectation’ is applied on a whole-school basis. To help our pupils succeed, we consider where they are both physiologically and emotionally. On a priority needs basis, all pupils have access to our sensory circuit, movement room and sensory rooms. Class teachers incorporate regular movement and sensory breaks into the school day being sure to complete the alerting, organising and calming phases of a movement/sensory break.



- Where needed, school initiatives such as our DfL system (Discipline for Learning) are modified and adapted for pupils with special educational needs. Restorative Practice questioning is used to help pupils reflect on certain behaviours in a non-aversive and safe way. All pupil behaviours are seen as communicating a message. Where appropriate, we use the SEAT (Sensory, Escape or avoidance, Attention, Tangible) strategy help us understand the functions of a pupil’s behaviour. Positive Behaviour Support Plans are used to support a pupil’s behaviour with a focus on how the adults working with the pupil can best support the pupil’s needs.
- The classroom environment is adapted to suit individual needs. All pupils are challenged and given the opportunity to experience success. All classrooms have visual schedules and other visual prompts and supports as needed. Accommodations are made to support pupils who may need physical adaptations to their school environment e.g., a wobble cushion, a writing slope or pencil grip etc. Careful thought and planning are given to finding the optimum layout of classrooms. Teachers are mindful of the sensory needs of pupils and endeavour to make the classroom a safe and secure environment for pupils with sensory needs.
- We recognise that the Social, Personal and Health Education programme, including programmes such as *The Zones of Regulation* programme, *Emotion Coaching* Programme and the *Roots of Empathy* programme support inclusive practice and we support professional development in this area.
- *Circle Time* is used to develop social skills and encourage inclusion of all pupils.
- Pupils are supported during break times. SNAs and Teachers on yard duty closely supervise pupils, dealing with, recording, and reporting any incidents that occur. Restorative practice



questions are used to support pupils at break time and in the classroom where needed. Visual prompts are used by teachers and SNAs where appropriate to reduce verbal demands on pupils and to promote desired behaviours.

Inclusive Practice and Our Autism Classes

- We have two autism-specific classes; An Early Intervention Class Preschool Class, which caters to children aged 3-5 years and a School Age Class, which caters for children aged 4-8 years.
- We use the term 'Autism Classes' as opposed to the term 'Autism Unit'. Each Autism classroom has a room number, as do all the mainstream classes. We are guided by parents as to how the pupils should be referred to when describing their additional needs, e.g., has autism, is autistic.
- It is our aim to build close, trusting relationships and to actively listen to our pupils as they communicate their needs in their own unique way.
- As in our mainstream classes, planning for teaching and learning in our autism classes focuses on learning in playful, thematic way.
- We begin our planning process by building a comprehensive profile of a pupil's strengths, interests and needs. We work to build on our pupils' strengths while addressing their needs using evidence-based approaches, strategies, and frameworks.

We use the following sources, training events, publications, assessment tools and teaching resources to support and guide planning and assessment in our Autism Classes.

- [Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools Supporting Children and Young People \(DE April 2022\)](#) _
- [Autistic Spectrum Disorders: A Guide to Classroom Practice](#)
- [National Council for Curriculum and Assessment](#)
- [A Pocket Guide to Autism \(asiam.ie\)](#)
- [Core Differences In Autism - Best Practice Resource \(middletownautism.com\)](#)
- [Psychiatry.org - What Is Autism Spectrum Disorder?](#)
- *The New Social Stories Book*, Illustrated Edition, Carol Gray (2009) – available in the resource room
- <https://ncse.ie/>
- [An Introduction to Sensory Integration, Middletown Centre for Autism \(2008\)](#)
- [Lámh](#)
- [TEACCH Preschool Curriculum Guide: A Curriculum Planning and Monitoring Guide for Young Children with Autism and Related Communication Disorders](#)
- [Social Communication, Emotional Regulation, and Transactional Support \(SCERTS\)](#)
SCERTS is an overarching, evidenced approach to autism education. Above is the NCSE Padlet that accompanied initial training for teachers in SCERTS (NCSE March 2024)
- *VB-MAPP: Verbal Behaviour Milestones Assessment and Placement Program* (The VB-MAPP Individual Child Protocol contains scoring forms and charts for each of the 170 milestones, the 24 language and learning barriers, the transition to less restrictive settings assessment, and the over 900 tasks contained in the task analysis of each skill area.) – available in the Autism classes
- *ABLLS-R: Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills Revised* (Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills – Revised (The ABLLS-R®), is an assessment tool, curriculum guide, and skills-tracking system used to help guide the instruction of language and critical learner skills for children with autism or other developmental disabilities.) – available in the Autism classes



- *Basic Skills Checklists: Teacher-Friendly Assessment for Students with Autism or Special Needs* (The Basic Skills Checklists features over fifty reproducible assessments to help you evaluate elementary pre-academic readiness and academic skills. We use them to get a quick snapshot of a child's abilities, to monitor progress or to help teachers transition students from one grade or class to another. Checklists cover Basic Concepts, Reading and Language Arts, Maths, Fine Motor, and Independence, as well as a Parent Checklist.) – available in the Autism classes
- *PEP-3: Psychoeducational Profile* – (Assessment of skills and behaviours of children with autism and communicative disabilities who function between the ages of 6 months and 7 years) - available in the Autism classes
- [Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities](#)
- [Attention Autism - Intervention Approaches](#)
- [Intensive Interaction](#)
- [Tasks Galore - Special Educational Tools](#)
- [Hanen - More Than Words \(Support for Parents\)](#)
- [Hanen - It Takes Two to Talk \(Support for Parents\)](#)
- [Hanen - Talkability \(Support for Parents\)](#)
- [Language Group Activities \(NEPS 2015\)](#)
- [Activities to Develop Receptive and Expressive Language Skills \(NEPS 2015\)](#)
- [Guidelines, Tips and Handouts for Parents and Teachers for Language Skills \(NEPS 2019\)](#)
- [CATGLD Planning Tool](#)
- [NCCA Curriculum Planning Tool](#)
- [Resources for Teachers on Speech, Language and Communication \(NCSE\)](#)
- [DLR Libraries Autism Spectrum Collection](#)
- In our daily practice, we strive to establish mutually trusting relationships with the parents of our pupils. We find that effective two-way communication helps to promote home-school collaboration. The parents of our pupils hold unique insights into their children's strengths and needs, and we greatly value their input.
- We adopt a team approach with a view to enhancing the quality of educational planning and help to maximise positive outcomes for students. This is done through collaboration and engagement with educational and health professionals, such as, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), The Health Service Executive (HSE) and Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA).
- A vital component of planning for learning in our autism classes is collaboration with parents to develop support plans for each pupil. These plans detail individual learning outcomes which focus as a starting point to meeting the language and communication, regulation, social, sensory and self-care needs of our pupils. We are guided by the individual interests of each pupil in our efforts to help our pupils engage with learning activities.
- Pupils' progress is regularly monitored, and progress is informed by effective assessment, for example, teacher-designed tasks, checklists, samples of work/ photographs and observation allowing pupils to demonstrate their progress.
- We are mindful of the theory of *Double Empathy*. The theory of the double empathy suggests that when people with very different experiences of the world interact with one another, they may struggle to empathise with each other. Studies have shown that those without autism can struggle to make sense of the behaviour of autistic individuals and this could negatively impact on their intentions to pursue social interactions with them. We are working towards supporting the adults and pupils in our school community without autism in their understanding of autism, and how they can best socially interact with the autistic members of our school community. According to Guldberg et al, it is important to understand the world from the perspective of students with autism, by moving away from a narrow focus on how a person



with autism behaves, to understanding autism from within. ([Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools: Supporting Children and Young People \(DE 2023\)](#))

- Where young, typically developing children have questions about the personality or behaviours of a child in our autism or mainstream classes, we answer those questions in a matter of fact, positive way. Where appropriate, practical differences are explained ‘usually s/he does that when s/he’s excited – just like you giggle when you’re excited’, ‘s/he doesn’t know as many words as you yet– point to the toy as well,’ etc.
- We aim to teach typically developing children how to ‘read’ non-verbal communication. For example, if a child asks ‘why does ____ stand beside me in the yard but doesn’t say anything?’, we explain this may be ____’s way of showing you they would like to play and so on.
- While spoken word is an important means of communication, we value all forms of communication. We promote alternative ways of communicating through the teaching of basic Lámh signs to adults and children working in our school.
- Where beneficial to the pupil, pupils from our autism classes take part in mainstream school events and activities such as assemblies, school plays /shows, Sports’ Day etc.
- To promote the development of social interaction and social imagination, we operate reverse inclusion whereby pupils from our mainstream classes are included in activities with our autism classes e.g., shared reading activities, art and music activities, in our movement room, the school garden and in the playground at break time.

Structured Inclusion of Pupils from our Autism Classes in Mainstream Classes

- SNA staff allocated by the NCSE to mainstream classes are there to support the various needs of pupils who attend our mainstream classes on a fulltime basis. A separate SNA allocation is made to support pupils in our autism classes. However, where mainstream SNA allocations allow, and where it is appropriate, we facilitate inclusion of pupils from our autism classes in mainstream class activities. This is in consultation with our pupils, parents, teaching staff, NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service) psychologist, who supports pupils through consultation and assessments and our SENO (Special Educational Needs Organiser), who makes decisions on the supports that a pupil with special educational needs receives.
- We endeavour to support inclusion in our mainstream classes for pupils that will benefit from it, and for whom such inclusion will support the pupil in achieving a learning outcome in their school support plan. Such inclusion is done on graduated basis and is tailored to each pupil’s strengths, interests, and needs. Time spent with the mainstream class increases as appropriate and is reviewed on a regular basis.
- Inclusion in mainstream class activities may not be suitable for all pupils. In making the decision as to whether a pupil will take part in mainstream class activities in the classroom setting, we follow direction on best practice from our NEPS psychologist taking into consideration the needs of the pupil, the availability of adult support and the availability of a suitable mainstream class.
- Inclusion in mainstream activities is based on success criteria. It will only be undertaken when the pupil has shown a capacity to engage well with class activities and manage transitions within the autism class setting and therefore has a high possibility of achieving success managing the mainstream environment. It will also only be undertaken where it is mutually beneficial to both the pupil from the autism class and their peers in the mainstream class.
- We value the distinction made in *Inclusive Education Framework* (NCSE 2011) between a pupil simply ‘being there’ and a pupil ‘taking part’ in the mainstream class setting. We seek to facilitate ‘actual participation’ by working to break down barriers to this and making



reasonable accommodations.

- We acknowledge that the autism class environment varies greatly from the mainstream class environment. We follow the evidenced-based best practice of having a low-arousal classroom setting in our autism classes. The mainstream class environment is appropriately very different to this. A pupil taking in part in class-based mainstream activities will with reasonable accommodations and supports have the capacity to manage the demands of the mainstream class setting. This will be evidenced by a capacity to, with support, transition to and enter the mainstream class setting without trepidation, attend to class activities, respond to general teacher instructions and cope with transitions from activity to activity and place to place in the mainstream setting. Having said this, we understand that all pupils may feel trepidation related to new experiences. We aim to make the experience of taking part in mainstream class activities as comfortable as possible for the pupil from the autism class by making accommodations suitable to each individual pupil.
- Where a decision has been made that a pupil from our autism classes will engage in social or academic based activities in the mainstream setting, careful thought and planning are given to how the pupil is 'paired' with a mainstream class to ensure successful experience for the pupil and taking into account other special educational needs in our mainstream classes. This process requires regular consultation between the autism class teacher, mainstream class teacher, parents/guardians and our NEPS psychologist.
- Teaching staff have clear and well-defined guidelines on good practice. We aim to have consistency throughout the school. Where inclusion in mainstream activities is appropriate for a pupil, there is a consistent, systematic process in place that all staff can follow to enable successful inclusion in mainstream activities. We recognise that different levels of inclusion in mainstream activities may be achieved.
- The following describes possible opportunities for inclusion in mainstream activities. We are guided by the pupil's interests, capabilities, needs and the learning outcomes in their School Support Plans when planning inclusion in mainstream activities.
 - ✓ With SNA support, the pupil plays with pupils of a similar age in the mainstream yard.
 - ✓ With SNA support, the pupil visit a mainstream class to take part in structured play session.
 - ✓ The pupil visits a mainstream classroom to access a specific curricular activity with an initial focus on one activity at a time. The pupil returns to the autism classroom once the activity has been completed. The activity is short in duration and is planned to ensure an enjoyable and successful visit. As appropriate, this is developed to include multiple activities of longer duration. SNA support is provided where appropriate and possible.
 - ✓ The pupil is timetabled to join their mainstream class for a specific period of time agreed by the autism class teacher and the mainstream class teacher. This allows the pupil to access multiple curricular areas with their mainstream peers and to experience more fully the routines of a mainstream classroom. The time spent in the mainstream setting can be extended as appropriate to include lining up with their peers in the morning and at home time. At all times, the pupil can return to the autism classroom if they wish.
- A buddy system may be operated as the need arises. Pupils from our school age autism class or those receiving SET support in our mainstream classes may have a buddy where it is mutually beneficial for both pupils. Shared activities may include interests that the pupils have e.g. Lego or other activities such as reading, indoor and outdoor games or incidental play at break times. We promote a welcoming and accepting attitude towards difference within the school community.



Embracing Cultural Diversity

Our school has become increasingly diverse, and this diversity brings with it the opportunity to develop our awareness of different cultures. We work intentionally to respect and recognise new communities and their contribution to the whole school community (See the Assumption JNS EAL policy for more information). We acknowledge the cultural diversity in our school by ensuring varied cultural identities are visible and celebrated in curricular materials such as library books, levelled readers, our SESE programmes etc., through celebration of the cultural events and festivals of significance to pupils, and through our annual celebration of the diverse cultural nature of school, International Day. We are guided in our planning by the [Together Towards Inclusion Toolkit \(NCCA 2007\)](#).

School Self- Evaluation

School self-evaluation (SSE) is an important process influencing the quality of the education provided for the pupils in our school. SSE is designed as a process of collaborative, internal school review that is focused on school improvement. We view whole-school reflective practice as a critical process in enhancing education provision for pupils with special educational needs including autism. We are guided by *Inclusive Education Framework, A Guide for Schools on the Inclusion of Pupils with Special Educational Needs*, (NCSE 2011) and we are also in the process of reflecting on our inclusive practice using the indicators of effective practice set out in *Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools: Indicators of Effective Practice* (DE 2023).

We use the *Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools* to support the wellbeing, learning and participation of pupils with autism in our school. We endeavour to assist school staff in understanding the varied nature of students’ strengths and needs, as well as to identify whole-school and individualised approaches to supports for students. The guidelines have been developed for students with autism, but many of the strategies can be adapted for those with other special educational needs, for example, learning, social or behavioural needs.

The guidance provides information and support across the following eight domains or principles or key ‘areas of practice’, to enhance the wellbeing, learning and participation of autistic students:



Key Principles to support whole-school inclusive practice.
Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools: Indicators of Effective Practice (2023).



- *Key Principle 1: Positive Inclusive Ethos*

Positive inclusive ethos that is responsive to the diversity of needs of learners and is actively promoted by leadership within the school.

- *Key Principle 2: Awareness and Understanding of the Needs of Students with Autism*

Awareness and understanding of the needs of students with autism across the entire school community, supported by relevant professional learning.

- *Key Principle 3: Collaborative Practice with Well-defined Roles for All*

Effective collaboration between school staff, parents and students, supported by external professionals as required.

- *Key Principle 4: Comprehensive Identification of Strengths and Needs*

Comprehensive identification of strengths and needs that is informed by an understanding of autism and associated difficulties, linked to a process of planning, teaching and review.

- *Key Principle 5: Allocation of Appropriate Teaching Supports*

Allocation of appropriate teaching supports to ensure that students with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest level of support.

- *Key Principle 6: Development of Environments Responsive to the Needs of Students with Autism*

Consideration of the needs of students with autism that relate to the school's learning, social and physical environment.

- *Key Principle 7: Students Have Access to a Broad Curriculum*

Access to a broad curriculum that is relevant and appropriate to students' needs, including the development of communication, social, emotional and daily living skills.

- *Key Principle 8: Use of Evidence-Informed Practice*

Use of evidence-informed practice to enhance the educational experience and lifelong learning outcomes for all students, including effective transition planning within and between settings.

Monitoring and Reviewing this Policy:

Implementation Date

This policy will be implemented in September 2024.

Timetable for Review

This policy will be reviewed, in conjunction with the Assessment Policy, in response to changes in legislation, DES circulars and the staff annual review of LS and assessment in June of each year.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 16/04/2024. Copies are available from the office and on the school website.

Signed: Maeva Sweeney Chairperson, BOM