

Additional Educational Needs Policy



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*Additional Educational Needs
Policy 2022*

St. Joseph's Secondary School Spanish Point

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Section 1. Introduction

The term Additional Educational Needs (AEN) will be used in this policy where appropriate. It will be substituted instead of Special Educational Needs (SEN) with the exception of where it is referred to specifically from legislation considered in the manufacture of this policy.

Aims

Our aims in developing this policy are to:

- Identify the current procedures and practices in the school
- Comply with current regulations and legislation in this area
- Establish and disseminate a formal process, structure and means of communicating information on students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN) in the school.

Operating Context

Mission Statement:

St. Joseph's is a Catholic school, based on Gospel Values and in the Mercy tradition under the trusteeship of CEIST. It is characterised by the following:

- Reverence and Respect,
- Tolerance and Inclusion
- Care and Compassion,
- Justice,
- Responsibility,
- Hospitality.

Our mission is to:

- Develop and promote the personal, academic and spiritual potential of each student in a caring and disciplined environment.
- Foster a sense of self-esteem, honesty and respect among all members of the school community.
- Assist students in developing appropriate life skills and social awareness.
- Offer direction and leadership in the educational field in the local community.

School Aims:

- To provide for religious formation in the context of the Catholic ethos of the school
- To endeavour to develop a sense of moral responsibility in students
- To assist students in developing appropriate life skills and social awareness
- To strive to ensure that each student will achieve her/his full educational potential
- To facilitate each student to achieve exam success in accordance with her/his ability
- To respect individual rights subject to the rights of the whole school community
- To respect the rights of staff in the performance of their professional duties

- To facilitate the holistic development of staff as educators
- To maximise links with the education partners for the benefit of the whole school community
- To offer direction and leadership in the educational field to the local community

Legal Context

This policy is drafted with reference to the following legislation and the statutory requirements placed on the school and the Board of Management by the following:

- The Education Act 1998
- The Education Welfare Act 2000
- The Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (EPSEN)
- The Disability Act (2005)
- The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)
- The European Union General Data Protection Regulation 2016

The policy was also prepared with in accordance with the following supporting publications:

- The Framework for Junior Cycle 2015
- Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines 2017
- Circular 30/2014, Circular 0014/2017 and Circular 0058/2019
- Guidelines for Post Primary Schools – Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools 2017
- Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools – Supporting Children and Young People 2022.

Inclusive Education

The NCSE (2011) describes inclusion as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners. It involves removing barriers so that each learner will be enabled to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her schooling.

This is characterised in St. Joseph’s Secondary School by:

- A positive ethos and learning environment whereby all students, including those with AEN feel welcome and experience a sense of community and belonging

- An emphasis on promoting students' participation and active engagement in their learning and in the life of the school
- A commitment to developing students' academic, social, emotional and independent living skills
- A focus on high aspirations and on improving outcomes for all students.

Other policies that support inclusion include: Code of Behaviour and the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Access

The school is inclusive of all students, catering for those with a wide range of abilities to those who have additional needs. Places for students with or without an additional educational need are allocated in line with the school's Admissions Policy.

Facilities - There are ramps into all school buildings and wheelchair accessible toilet facilities. Break times are fully supervised.

Section 2. Categories of SEN/AEN

Definition of Special Educational Needs Used In This Policy

The term "special educational needs" is defined in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 1-(1) 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... "

While this definition in the act does not refer to students with emotional behavioural difficulties, section 7 (4)(b) of Equal Status Act (ESA) 2000 does indicate a category of special need in this case and the school will be mindful of such students also in providing for additional needs in this policy. Furthermore, The Education Act 1998 recognises "giftedness" as an additional education condition and the school will meet the needs of children diagnosed as gifted or talented.

Categories of AEN

The various categories of additional educational needs, the definitions of these categories, and the criteria for the allocation of additional resources and the procedures for application are set by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and are as follows:

- Physical Disability
- Hearing Impairment

- Visual Impairment
- Emotional/Behavioural Difficulty/Disturbance
- Severe Emotional/Behavioural Difficulty/Disturbance
- Borderline Mild General Learning Disability
- Mild General Learning Disability
- Medical Condition
- Moderate General Learning Disability
- Severe/Profound General Learning Disability
- Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- Specific Learning Disability
- Assessed Syndrome
- Specific Speech and Language Disorder
- Multiple Disabilities

Section 3. Roles & Responsibilities

Role of the BOM

The Board of Management of St. Josephs has an important role in overseeing the development, monitoring and review of school policy. The Board of Management should liaise with the principal to facilitate quality provision for students with AEN by aiming to secure the best possible environment for those students.

Role of the School Principal

The Department's post-primary guidelines on inclusion outlines the role of the school principal in supporting students with additional educational needs. It states that 'Under current legislation the principal of the school has overall responsibility for ensuring that the special educational needs of students are met. As a consequence, the principal has the general responsibility for establishing and promoting whole-school policies and procedures that are supportive of the learning of all students, including those with special educational needs' (Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines; DES, 2017, p 67).

Role of the AEN Core Team

The role of the AEN core team is to develop, implement and monitor a whole-school approach to the education of students with special education needs. The members of the Core Team may vary from year to year. Senior management and the Guidance Counsellor provide valuable support to the team. The AEN core team consists of the school SENCOs and the Special educational needs teachers(SETs).

The core team has responsibility for:

- Applying for access to a Special Needs Assistant in consultation with the student's parents
- Analysis of entrance exams results to identify students for AEN support, as well as to identify gifted students
- Communication of relevant information to staff
- Meeting with parents, students, primary school staff and outside agencies and implementing suggestions
- Prepare and implement transition plans for incoming students with AEN
- Diagnostic testing of students to identify their strengths and needs
- Arranging and attending meetings with parents of students with AEN who have SSP's, analysis of psychological reports for these students and completing SSP's for all students based on these meetings. Students may attend these meetings, if appropriate
- Identification of targets, strengths and needs of students in receipt of Support for Some and preparation of Student Support Plan based on these
- Identifying students for Reasonable Accommodations in the State Exams (RACE) through consultation with parents, students, teachers and outside agencies and following through on this by completing the RACE applications and preparing the supporting documentation
- Liaising with the State Examinations Commission, the school exam secretary and the in house examinations coordinator regarding reasonable accommodations
- Referring students to National Educational Psychological services (NEPS) for psychological assessments and reports
- Meeting with parents at parent teacher meetings to discuss strengths, targets and progress of students
- Completing Continuing Professional Development in relation to AEN.

Year Heads & Class Tutors

Year Heads support the creation of an inclusive climate within the school and their role is to establish an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment for all students within that year and maintain it with effective communication. Year Heads facilitate the inclusion of an individual student with additional educational needs by monitoring the student's academic and behavioural progress within the year group. Class tutors play a pastoral role in facilitating the inclusion of students with Additional Educational Needs through building relationships and aiding in the implementation of transition plans for individual students.

The Role of the Mainstream Class Teacher

“The classroom teacher is responsible for educating all students in his or her class, including any students with a special educational need. The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in his/her classroom, including students with special educational needs” (Circular 14/2017)

All teachers in the school have students with additional educational needs in their classroom.

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

The mainstream teacher has the responsibility for ensuring that all students, including those with additional educational needs, are provided with a learning programme and environment that enables them to gain access to the curriculum and to advance their learning. Mainstream teachers have a central role in identifying students who may be at risk and for drawing the attention of the AEN team to such students. A teacher may become concerned about a student's general progress, application, communication, behaviour, or interaction with other students and as a result make accommodations for the student within the class. If the concerns are not alleviated following the implementation of these accommodations the teacher should consult other teachers and the AEN team.

Mainstream teachers make a critical contribution through the creation of a supportive, caring environment in the school for students with additional educational needs, through which these students are affirmed in their ability to learn and to participate generally in the life of the school. All subject teachers should implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of students with additional educational needs. These include:

- Co-operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms
- Collaborative problem-solving activities
- Heterogeneous group work
- Differentiation
- Interventions to promote social and emotional competence
- Embedding of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching, learning and assessment

Students' levels of interest, attention, concentration and persistence should be gradually developed, extended and consolidated, using appropriate teaching strategies. To cater for the range of learning needs in any class, subject teachers will regularly need to differentiate their lessons. This can be achieved by:

- Varying the level, structure, mode of instruction and pace of lessons to meet individual needs

- Adapting lessons for students' interests
- Matching tasks and processes to students' abilities and needs
- Adapting and utilising resources, including use of technology
- Aspiring towards suitably challenging learning outcomes and assessing accordingly.

Teachers can make lessons accessible to a broad range of students through the use of a variety of appropriate teaching approaches and methodologies, including active learning, small-group tuition, individual teaching, and scaffolded instruction. This may also require appropriate environmental adaptations to promote curricular access. Every student should be taught a curriculum that is appropriate to his/her developmental level.

The mainstream teachers keep parents informed of their children's progress through regular parent-teacher meetings and school reports.

The Additional Educational Needs Teacher

The additional educational needs teacher, in collaboration with the student's subject teacher, works to identify targets and devise plans for interventions, learning support and resource classes. The additional educational needs teachers are those who are timetabled to teach remedial and learning support classes and those who are timetabled as team teachers.

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

The Special Needs Assistant

SNA support is provided specifically to cater for the care needs of pupils with disabilities in an educational context, where the nature of these care needs have been outlined in professional reports as being so significant that a pupil will require adult assistance in order to be able to attend school and to participate in education.

Allocation of SNA support

Special needs assistants (SNAs) play an important role in assisting the teacher to support students with special educational needs who have significant care needs. They are allocated to the school and work under the direction of the principal/teachers. The SNA usually supports a number of students with care needs in the school. Most students with special educational needs do not have significant care needs and therefore will not need access to a special needs assistant while at school. This gives the school the flexibility to manage the allocation of SNA support to the best possible effect. Targeted support is given to students who have the greatest level of need at any given time, recognising that the level of need that a child may have may be variable over time.

SNAs will be deployed in a manner which best meets the care support requirements of the students enrolled in the school for whom SNA support has been allocated. It is a matter for the school principal to allocate the support as required.

Role of the SNA

SNAs are important and valued members of the school community and they are an important school resource. SNAs participate fully in the life of school and may therefore assist other children in the school who from time to time need assistance, or who have intermittent care needs, but who may not have been assessed as requiring SNA support on a permanent basis.

The SNAs role is not to act as a constant personal assistant to individual children who need to develop independent living skills and to associate independently with their classmates. Neither is their role to act as an alternative teachers for children with AEN, who are required to be taught by the class teacher with additional support from Additional Educational Teachers in schools. SNAs do not have a teaching/pedagogical role.

SNAs duties are assigned at the discretion of the Principal, or another person acting on behalf of the Principal, and/or the Board of Management in accordance with Circular 0071/2011.

Level and Duration of Support

Students will access the support of the SNA based upon their level of need, which can range from a requirement for brief periods during the day to most of the school day in some instances. The key aspiration for students with AEN is that they will, on completion of their education, be able to graduate as young independent adults as far as possible. There is therefore a need to balance the support provided with each student's right to acquire independent personal skills. As such, in order to give those students every opportunity possible to develop independent living skills, the SNA support given to them should always be at a minimum level required to meet the care needs of the students. The care needs of students may change over time. Many children will naturally have diminishing care needs as they get older and as they develop both physically and socially.

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

It is neither appropriate nor beneficial for a child to have a permanent allocation of SNA support which would follow them throughout their school career without recourse to a consideration of changing needs. This could impede the child's development of independent living skills, interaction with peers, or stigmatise the child through association with a permanent allocation of adult support, at a point of their development where this support would no longer be required.

All SNA allocations are subject to annual review by the NCSE. As part of this process school and parental feedback will form part of the review.

Guidelines for SNA's in St. Joseph's Secondary School

- SNA's are expected to treat all matters relating to school business and their work in the school as strictly confidential
- The SNA shall be known by their first name among staff and students.
- The class teacher is responsible for the teaching, direction and management of all activities in the classroom.
- SNA's may be re-assigned to other work appropriate to the post when special needs pupils are absent or when particular urgent work demands arise. The teacher/Principal will determine what the SNA can help with and how it is to be done.
- SNA's may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class or group of children.
- Engagement with parents of special needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by school management, or parent/guardian.
- Judgement of a student's progress is the sole responsibility of the class teacher, as is the implementation of classroom discipline.
- The student with additional needs should be encouraged to complete tasks independently at all times.
- The SNA should have access to any relevant staff training and attend a portion of the staff meeting as determined by the Principal.
- In cases of student misbehaviour involving their own charges the SNA must inform the class teacher who will deal with the matter. If it is outside the classroom the matter should be referred to the teacher on duty or to the Principal.

Section 4. Supporting Students with Additional Educational Needs

Allocating AEN Resources

Additional Educational Needs Teaching Allocation

The NCSE and DES allocate AEN hours to the school based on its educational profile. This allows the school to provide additional educational teaching support to all students that require it.

Resources are deployed based on each student's individual learning needs without the requirement of a diagnosis of a disability.

Supports provided to the school should be used solely for the support of students with identified educational needs, including those students from whom English as an Additional Language.

Students with the greatest levels of need should have access to the greatest level of support.

The decision on how teaching resources will be allocated and distributed is decided by Management in conjunction with the AEN core team.

Identification of Students with Additional Educational Needs

Students' educational needs are identified using the Continuum of Support Framework. The framework recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long term, and that students require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs.

These needs include academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. Accordingly support is organised at three different levels:

- Support for All
- School Support (for Some)
- School Support Plus (for a Few)

Identification of Educational Needs	
Whole-School and Classroom (Support for All)	<p>Identification of those needing additional support can be informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intake screening – Enrolment forms ● Collection of information from primary school, including Educational Passport ● Standardised tests, CAT4 ● PPADE literacy testing ● Year Head System ● Wellbeing Team ● Student Support Team meetings ● Academic Monitoring ● Student Register ● Student and Parent meetings ● Teacher observation and assessment ● Learning Environment Checklist ● Social Skills Assessment
School Support (for Some)	<p>At this level a Support Plan is devised and informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parental referral ● Student interview ● Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy ● Academic monitoring ● Psychological reports, ● Medical reports, ● Consultation with outside agencies ● Student Register of Need ● VS Ware records ● Formal observation of behaviour using behavioural checklist, ● AEN Core Team meetings ● Learning Environment Checklist
School Support Plus (for a few)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dyslexia Screening ● Parental consultation ● Psychological Reports ● Medical Reports ● Consultation with outside agencies

Delivery of Support

Using the 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 framework enables the school to identify and respond to students' needs in a flexible way. This process is also supported through engagement with external professionals, as required.

Interventions	
<p>Whole-School and Classroom (Support for All)</p>	<p>This support is available at a whole-school level to every student.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vocabulary Programmes, Spelling B ● Numeracy Programmes ● TTRS touch typing and literacy programme ● Differentiated teaching techniques ● Use of active teaching methodologies ● Co-operative teaching – in class support in Maths and English. ● Academic monitoring – monitoring of student progress in Autumn, Spring and Summer exams ● Working with all staff regarding concerns about students' academic progress and behaviour ● Weekly Student Support Team meetings – to discuss the needs of students and identify supports ● Awards day – recognition of achievements and participation across the whole school ● Merit system. VSware positive behaviour system with certificates of merit ● Buddy system – senior students support First Year students on their transition to secondary school. CAIRDE programme. ● Wellbeing Week ● Student Council – representative of the views of the students in the school ● Transition Year ● Anti bullying policy
<p>School Support (for Some)</p>	<p>Support at this level can take many forms, for example: team-teaching, small group or individualised tuition, peer mentoring, inclusion in social skills groups, behaviour reward and consequence systems.</p>

	<p>A support plan operates for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Heterogeneous groupings ● Small group teaching ● One-2-one teaching ● Retracking Programme ● Anger Management Programmes ● EAL Resources ● NBSS Behaviour Supports and Resources ● Literacy and numeracy programmes ● Behaviour Report Card
School Support Plus (for a few)	<p>Students at this level have significant difficulties. They may require individualised and targeted programmes.</p> <p>Support at this level in St. Josephs may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SNA access ● Student Support Plan ● One-to-one or small group classes with SET. ● Involvement of specialists such as psychologists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, etc. ● Engagement with outside agencies ● Reading pens ● Speech and language programme ● Occupation Therapy programme

Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations

The scheme of Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE) facilitates access to the certificate examinations by candidates who would have difficulty in accessing the examination or communicating what they know to an examiner because of a physical, visual, hearing and/or learning difficulty. The scheme assists candidates who have special educational needs to demonstrate what they know and can do in certificate examinations, without compromising the integrity of the assessment. The focus of the scheme is on removing barriers to access, while retaining the need to assess the same underlying skills and competencies as are assessed for all other candidates, and to apply the same standards of achievement as apply to all other candidates. The scheme provides accommodations for students with a variety of complex special educational needs including learning difficulties as well as permanent or temporary physical, visual, hearing, medical, sensory, emotional, behavioural or other conditions.

Examples of exams accommodations may include some of the following:

- Spelling and grammar waiver

- Access to an individual reader
- Access to a reading assistant
- Access to a scribe
- Use of a word processor
- Use of a recording device
- Extra time
- Access to a special centre

It is important to note that an explanatory note will appear on the student's certificate of results indicating that their examination procedure was altered.

Assessing Eligibility for RACE Applications

- RACE applications are made on the basis of the **current** needs of the student.
- A student does not need a diagnosis of an AEN to be eligible for RACE and neither does a diagnosis guarantee that a student will qualify for RACE.
- RACE applications are made by the AEN department on behalf of candidates whose special needs have already been identified and who have been accessing support on an ongoing basis in school.
- Standardised testing is administered by the AEN department for eligibility for reading and writing accommodations.
- JC RACE applications are applied for in the first term of Third Year.
- An application to reactivate support is submitted for the LC examinations in the first term of 6th Year. The support provided at Junior Cycle will be provided at Leaving Certificate, subject to confirmation by the school authority of an identified and continuing need.

Further information is available from: <http://www.examinations.ie/>

Reasonable Accommodations in Mock Examinations

Every effort is made to provide the necessary support for students in the mock examinations. However, the support is subject to the availability of resources.

Exemption from the Study of Irish

Students may be exempted from the study of Irish if they comply with DES Circular 0055/2022. The decision to exempt a student from the study of Irish is an important decision that has implications for his/her future learning. The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the principal, but it must be made following detailed discussion with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), the class teacher/s, additional education needs teachers and the student.

Only students with official exemptions are allowed to give up Irish, regardless of the level of Irish studied at primary school. Students who have been granted an exemption from Irish but who wish to continue studying the language can do so.

Section 5. Communication

The student register is on the staff shared drive. Scores of all students from the ability and attainment tests are easily available to teachers on the shared drive. All teachers have access to this in school. The SSP, resources and strategies are also on staff shared drive. These should be used in planning for students with AEN.

The school works with an educational psychologist from NEPs, speech and language therapists, clinical nurse managers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and other relevant agencies where applicable.

Parental Engagement

Good parental engagement is a critical factor in enhancing outcomes for students with AEN. Parents should be consulted on their child's needs and strengths, on the support and strategies being developed to support their children, and when they are involved in regular reviews of progress.

Outlined are our current practices in promoting parental engagement

Transition to Post Primary

The quality of a child's experience in making the transition to post-primary education can be a determinant of how well they will settle in school and even of how long they will remain in formal education. Parents can provide valuable support to a child with special educational needs while the child is making the transition.

- Enrolment Form – Parents are asked to inform the school of their child's additional needs prior to enrolment
- Information Night for parents of incoming First Years while they are in 6th class
- Parental questionnaire is sent out to parents of incoming students with AEN
- Individual meeting with students and parents while they are in 6th class

In-school

Parents are contacted if a student has been identified as needing support. If further support is required the school may refer the student to an outside agency and parents are supported and provided with detailed information of possible referral routes. If a parent has a concern at any stage during their child's time in our school they are encouraged to contact the AEN department.

The AEN department maintains regular, informal contact with parents regarding their child's progress and they in turn are encouraged to share any relevant information with the AEN Department.

Parents of students with more complex needs are in regular contact with the AEN Department. Parental support is vital in ensuring that the child is prepared, organised, is punctual and attends school on a regular basis.

Documentation and Record Keeping

Data may be received from outside or may be generated within the school. Data from outside will include psychological reports and reports from parents or from other schools.

Data may be created in the school, for example in relation to assessment, student progress, state examinations, or planning for transfer inwards from the primary school and, at the completion of post-primary education, transfer onwards to a post-school setting.

All staff must treat data related to an individual student in a sensitive and confidential manner.

The AEN core team is responsible for the management of the file on each student with additional educational needs. The student's school file contains all reports by outside professionals, such as psychologists, speech and language therapists etc. The procedures, by which access to confidential information on a particular student, including information held in their official school file, may be obtained by staff members, parents and outside agencies has been agreed.

St. Joseph's acts in accordance with the Data Protection Acts (1988 and 2003) in relation to the management and maintenance of data on individual students. Manual reports are stored in a secure, locked filing cabinet that only personnel who are authorised to use the data can access. Computer records are password protected and firewall software has been installed.

Documentation of lessons and learning plans are created and kept by the individual learning support or resource teacher.

Student Support Plans are prepared for students as required. They are stored on the AEN Google Drive Folder which can be accessed by all staff.

Section 6. Enrolment

Transition

The quality of a student's experience in making the transition to post-primary education can be determinant of how well they will settle in school and even of how long they will remain in formal education. Parents can provide valuable support to their child with special educational needs while making the transition. The provision within the school of giving advice to the parents of first year students can make a positive contribution to helping them to provide positive support to their son. St. Joseph's provides this support to parents by:

- Organising an open night for new students and their parents before the start of the school year.
- Organising an open day for students where they can come and experience a day in secondary school to recommence in 2022.
- Issuing information for new students and their parents.
- Providing information to parents on subjects their child will be studying during first year.
- Informing parents about the range of extracurricular activities available for first year students so that parents can encourage their child to participate.
- Having an effective anti-bullying policy (including CAIRDE mentoring programme) and, as appropriate, keeping parents informed of issues related to bullying that might affect their child.
- Educational Passports from Primary Schools

Section 7. Assessment

Screening

All incoming First Year students complete the CAT4 Test digitally before they start in school. The NGRT test is administered during September of their first year. The Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4) is a diagnostic assessment that is designed to help students and their teachers understand how they learn and what their academic potential might be. It assesses how students think in areas that are known to make a difference to learning. It tests thinking about shapes and patterns (Non-Verbal Reasoning), words (Verbal Reasoning), numbers (Quantitative Reasoning) and some questions are answered by mentally generating and transforming visual images (Spatial Ability). Results help teachers decide about the pace of

learning that is right for a student and whether additional support or challenge is needed. The PPADE tests students' literacy skills.

In September all First Year students will then be given the PDST Maths Competency Test by the Maths Department and will be required to complete one sample of free writing as administered by the English department.

The results of all these tests, reports from primary school and consultation with parents will be used to determine if a student will receive additional support. It may be necessary to conduct further diagnostic testing for students attending learning support.

The reports of the CAT4 testing are sent out to all parents.

Assessment, Monitoring and Tracking

All students sit house subject assessments at 10, 20 and 30 weeks into the school year. The results of these subject assessments are reviewed by the Student Support Team, Academic Monitor and the AEN core team. Each student in receipt of additional support will have a Student Support Plan (SSP) which will be on the staff shared drive. This drive can only be accessed on site and is password protected. The SSP guides a student's learning and progress and charts their learning needs. It should be developed and reviewed by teachers in conjunction with students, parents and, if necessary, others involved in the students' learning.

Currently SSPs are written for students who access Support for Some and are reviewed each term.

Students who access Support for a Few will have a Student Support Plan. These are plans that detail student's needs and their targets for improvement. These targets are set using feedback from teachers/SNAs, AEN team meetings and consultations with students and parents. These targets are reviewed regularly.

Section 8. Liaison with External Agencies

The AEN Department works with a number of outside agencies to support the education of students with special education needs.

NCSE Support Service

NEWB – National Educational Welfare Board

Brothers of Charity – School Age Teams

CAMHS – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

Tusla – Social Workers/Case Referrals

HSE - Health Service Executive

NEPS – National Educational Psychological Service

The school has access to NEPS and they support the school by:

- Counselling students
- Carrying out psychological assessments
- Offering advice to students, parents and teachers
- Giving guidance to the AEN Dept

The school is given a limited number of assessments per year and parents may choose to have their child privately assessed.

Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO)

A SENO is assigned to the school by the NCSE. SENOs allocate resources to the school and ensure that these resources are used efficiently. They can also support and advise parents of students with SEN.

St. Joseph’s School Autism Policy : ‘Radharc na Mara’

This Policy document sets out the aims, principles and strategies for the education of pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at St. Joseph’s Secondary school.

RATIONALE:

In order to meet the needs of all pupils across the spectrum at St. Joseph’s, we use an eclectic mix of established and researched approaches and interventions; drawing on best practice and continuously monitoring and evaluating their use. Our child centred approach, with emphasis on personalised learning, addresses the specific needs of each individual child. Pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder may be taught in an autism specific class. Some pupils may be able to access learning within a mainstream class, but this will depend on the severity of their Autism.

AIMS:

Radharc na Mara (ASD Class) provides a support structure for students with a diagnosis on the autistic spectrum. The aim of Radharc na Mara is to ensure that students with this disorder achieve their potential and enable them to function more effectively in the mainstream classes.

The ‘St. Francis’ room caters for Additional needs students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The goal of the centre is ‘inclusion’ and integration of its students into the mainstream class.

KEY PRINCIPLES:

The Policy will

- Provide a framework relating to children and young people with ASD.
- Continue to develop and implement a continuum of provision.
- Recognise and seek to maximize each child and young person's potential.
- Acknowledge the need to work collaboratively with children/young people and their families.
- Work towards ensuring that the Department of Education policy in relation to the education of children with Autism is strictly enforced.

The Department's policy is focused on ensuring that all children, including those with autism spectrum disorders, can have access to an education appropriate to meeting their needs and abilities. The policy is to provide for children with additional educational needs, including autism, to be included in mainstream schools unless such a placement would not be in their best interests or the interests of the children with whom they are to be educated. Some children with more complex additional educational needs may be supported in a special class in a mainstream school. These children have the option, where appropriate, of full or part-time inclusion and interaction with other children. Other children may have such complex needs that they are best placed in a special school. (National Council for Special Education-N.C.S.E)

STRATEGIES:

An A.S.D student is characterised by the following impairments:

- Impairment of social and emotional understanding including impaired theory of mind.
- Impairment of communication and imagination.
- Restricted repertoire of activities and interests.

Strategies and methodologies used to support the students include the following:

- Social stories and other individual social behaviour strategies
- A direct social skills training programme e.g. Alex Kelly 'Talkabout for Teenagers'
- A Leisure programme/Life skills programme
- Reverse Integration
- Sensory/movement breaks
- Relationships and Sexuality
- Allocating time for Speech and Language/Occupational therapy exercises where assigned by other professionals.

Pupils with ASD may also experience unusual sensitivity to sound, touch and visual stimuli. In order to ensure that pupils on the autistic spectrum are able to access the broad, balanced

and relevant curriculum offered throughout the school, these additional difficulties characteristic of pupils on the autistic spectrum need to be taken into account.

The pupils with ASD are supported by staff members who have specific training in aspects of Autism. In addition, many members of staff have received training in supporting pupils with ASD so awareness is spread across the school. (Special Education Support Service-S.E.S.S.) Structure, visual support and individualised strategies appropriate for each individual are provided to aid a pupil's access to the curriculum.

CURRICULUM PROVISION:

St. Joseph's ASD Programme provides the opportunity for all of our students to achieve the greatest level of meaningful independence whilst at the same time catering for their educational needs.

Classes take the form of supported (SNA Circular 0030/2014)/unsupported mainstream inclusion, classes involving curricular support or classes unique to the ASD room. Programmes such as non-curricular Literacy and Numeracy Skills, Music/Fundamental Movement, Meditation, Direct Social Skills training, Personal Care, Speech and Language development are delivered in Radharc na Mara).

Students are also afforded the opportunity to practice 'Life Skills' in the wider community.

The School caters for a wide range of students from those looking to pursue state examinations including Junior Cycle Student Award, Priority Learning Units Level Two award, Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied to those focusing on personal skills aimed at increasing their quality of life, independence and life skills once they leave St. Joseph's.

The school does, however, recognise that pupils on the Autistic Spectrum have additional difficulties which necessitate the adaption of the courses of study prescribed in the Department of Education Curriculum. This may mean a greater emphasis on certain areas of need for these children e.g. communication, social development.

Therefore, pupils access a full differentiated curriculum delivered in a way that addresses the triad of impairment. Underpinning all teaching and learning is an emphasis on the development of independence, social interaction, social understanding and social communication. Lessons are planned to facilitate development in these areas but specific teaching, for example in social skills, life skills and sensory desensitization are also included. We provide many 'real life' opportunities, for example, educational visits are used to help reduce rigidity and develop appropriate social skills.

Assessment:

We use a variety of Assessments at St. Joseph's. Using the AFLS (Assessment for Functional Living Skills), challenging, but realistic, targets are set with pupils' learning styles and pace of learning in mind. Pupil progress is tracked and recorded each year and targets are reported

to parents. Student Support Plans are compiled for the student on the ASD spectrum; targets are set each term and may be ASD specific. These aim to reduce barriers to learning.

Informal Assessments are also carried out, which are ASD specific, e.g. Social and Communication assessments. These assessments are chosen to help develop the student's strengths and challenges in areas of communication, daily living and socialisation skills.

Continuity of Approach

We recognise the importance of generalising the skills that pupils learn both across school and within a range of settings. Class teachers regularly liaise with multi-disciplinary teams, respite workers, parents and carers to ensure continuity of approaches in and out of school.

Training

Staff in autism specific classes are trained in autism specific practices and interventions such as 'ABA' 'PECS', 'TEACCH', Social Stories and Intensive Interaction. All staff have attended internal training on autism-awareness and good practice (Delivered by the Special Education Support Service (S.E.S.S.) and have completed the ASD specific 'Fundamental Movement Skills Programme provided by Dr. Susan Crawford. School staff are kept up to date with current research relating to the education and wellbeing of pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Currently there are two members of staff with a Post Graduate Diploma in SEN specific to Autistic Spectrum Disorder. St.Joseph's believes that all children and young people with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) should have access to high quality services and be able to participate in a wide range of everyday and leisure activities as other children do. Their families should have access to effective support from the School and staff should have the necessary knowledge and skills to work effectively.

Roles and responsibilities:

St. Joseph's will seek to:

- Ensure that the services work in partnership with parents/carers, voluntary services to provide an integrated service.
- Make sure that staff and parents/carers have access to a broad range of Training opportunities.
- Support whole school settings to become ASD-friendly.
- Have close links with all relevant agencies to promote successful transitions between stages of education, including transition from Primary School.
- Support the parents/guardian in the transition from post primary to the world of work/further education.

All provision will seek to be ASD friendly by:

- Working closely with parents or carers and their families, consulting them about the child or young person.
- Including children and young people in planning and decision making (Student Voice).
- Making sure a named member of staff is available to discuss any concerns that the student with ASD may have.
- Supporting families by ensuring that out of school activities include provision for children and young people with ASD.
- Ensuring that activities and the curriculum on offer to the young person with ASD are tailored to meet their needs.
- Raising awareness with children and young people of disability including ASD.
- Modifying the environment as far as possible to take account of the individual difficulties with sensory stimuli experienced by some children and young people with ASD.
- Providing opportunities for children and young people with ASD to generalise skills learnt in one setting/lesson to other situations/settings.
- Recognising that Information and Communications Technology can be a particularly effective medium for children and young people with ASD.
- Making sure all staff are aware of this policy.
- Having a named person who can provide guidance to staff, ensuring that all who come into contact with a child or young person with ASD are aware of their particular strengths and needs.
- Keeping an up-to-date bank of information and resources about ASD for use by staff and parents or carers.
- Ensuring the successful transition between schools/settings by exchanging accurate and up-to-date records and ways of working with the child or young person with ASD.

We have high but realistic expectations for all our pupils. We endeavour to provide the very best learning experiences through a personalised approach. To achieve this, provision for pupils on the autistic spectrum is continuously monitored, evaluated and adapted as part of the self-evaluation process.

Section 9. Review and Ratification of Policy

Review

A review of this policy will take place on a regular basis and will take into account feedback from all our stakeholders.

Grievance Procedure

Parents/students who are concerned or who wish or make suggestions of any aspect of the school's educational provision should contact a member of the senior management team.

Ratification

This policy was ratified on 15/12/2022

Chairperson: 

Secretary: 