



Special Education Policy

Introduction

Lumcloon N.S. caters for children from Junior Infants to 6th Class and is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois. As of September 1st 2022, the school staff consists of an administrative Principal, 2 mainstream class teachers, 3 ASD class teachers, 1 full-time Special Education Support teacher, and 1 part-time Special Education Support teacher. The school has 7 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs).

The allocation of both Special Education Support teachers and Special Needs Assistants is subject to review by the NCSE and DES.

Rationale

The purpose of this policy document is to provide information to school personnel and parents on how we organise provision for teaching and support of children with special educational needs. The term special educational needs is broad and includes children who have difficulty acquiring literacy and/or numeracy skills, children with difficulties with fine or gross motor skills, children who have English as an additional language (if that impacts on their progress) and children who have a diagnosis of challenges or difficulties that impact their learning.

In this document, SEN can be taken to be special educational needs in this broad sense and we will use the term Special Education Teachers (SET) for all of the SEN teachers.

The policy is based on [Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools](#) (Department of Education).

The principal aim of supporting pupils with special educational needs is to optimise the teaching and learning process so as to enable them achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.

Relationship to the characteristic spirit of the school

Lumcloon N.S. hopes to serve all the children in the community and provide an appropriate education for all pupils of the school. Each and every child in our school is valued and can enrich our whole school community.

Specific Objectives of SEN Support

Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

- Enable pupils of all abilities to avail of and benefit from an appropriate education.
- Facilitate pupils to participate in the curriculum for their class level.

- Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning.
- Enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners within their own ability.
- Involve parents in supporting their children’s learning.
- Promote collaboration among teachers.

Guiding Principles

The school recognises that effective learning programmes are based on the following principles:

- Effective whole-school policies.
- Whole school involvement.
- Provision of intensive early intervention.
- Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need.
- Quality of teaching.
- Implementation of a staged approach to support provision at Class Support/School Support/School Support Plus levels.
- Provision of the model(s) of intervention appropriate for the child, including the withdrawal model, in-class support model, individual or group work, etc.

Prevention Strategies

As a means of preventing the occurrence of learning difficulties, as far as possible, the following strategies are being implemented:

- The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to language development e.g. phonological awareness
- The development and implementation of an agreed whole school approach to the Maths programme e.g. Maths language
- Promotion of parental involvement through their attendance at induction meetings for parents of incoming Junior Infants
- Formal and informal Parent/Teacher meetings
- Class-based early intervention by the class teacher resulting in provision of additional support.
- On-going observation and assessment of pupils by class teachers

Continuum of Support – Staged Approach

Stage 1. Classroom Support

If a class teacher or parent has concerns about the academic, physical, social or emotional development of a child, the class teacher will then construct a simple, individual plan of support to be implemented in the normal class setting. This plan will form the 1st instructional page of the child’s Continuum of Support and will be based on screening measures administered by the teacher.

The plan will be reviewed after each instructional term (using the Review Page from the Continuum of Support document. See Appendix 1). If the plan is working well for the child it may be decided to continue with it. If insufficient progress is made and the child is still having difficulty then Stage 2 (School Support) is implemented.

Stage 2. School Support

If further intervention is deemed necessary (after further diagnostic testing by the SET) and the child is to receive supplementary teaching at School Support Level then a letter of consent will be sent to the parents by the SET in question. (Template of letter kept in red SEN folder and in document folder in Aladdin).

The class teacher and SET then draw up a plan of appropriate learning outcomes for the child. This plan will form the 2nd instructional page of the child's Continuum of Support and will be implemented in conjunction with the child's Classroom Support Plan. The child's parents/guardians will be informed of this plan, invited to contribute and asked to sign it. This plan will be reviewed at the end of each instructional term and if significant concerns remain after a number of reviews, it may be necessary to involve outside agencies such as NEPS or the HSE. (Stage 3)

Stage 3. School Support Plus

The school may formally request a consultation from other professionals outside the school in respect of children who fail to make sufficient progress after supplementary teaching or the implementation of a behavioural programme, as appropriate. Such professional advice is sought from psychologists, speech therapists, audiologists, occupational therapists etc. This is carried out in consultation with and with the permission of the child's parents/guardians. Following the consultation, the class teacher, SET, parents and outside professional (if available) will draw up a Learning Programme for the child.

In case of children identified at an early age as having significant special educational needs, intervention at Stage 3 will be necessary on their entry to school.

Support in the classroom will be an essential component of any learning programme devised for such children and primary responsibility for the child will remain with the class teacher in consultation with the designated Learning Support teacher.

Early Intervention

The principle of Early Intervention applies; therefore pupils in junior classes are given priority in the allocation of Learning Support

- Junior Infant pupils are screened using teacher observation
- Senior Infants are screened annually in February, using the Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) and teacher observation.
- Pupils from 1st-6th class are screened annually in the summer term using approved standardised test of literacy and test of maths.
- Priority for Learning Support is given to those pupils who perform at or below the 10th percentile.
- In the case of pupils performing at or below the 10th percentile, the screening process is followed by a meeting between the Class Teacher and the Special Education Co-Ordinator concerning the pupil's performance.

- Parental consent is sought for the conducting of diagnostic assessment and possible provision of supplementary teaching.

Diagnostic testing is carried out as per our Assessment policy. A further consultative meeting between Class teacher and Special Education Co-Ordinator then takes place to consider the outcome of assessment.

In the allocation of places for Learning Support, the following are prioritised in line with the staged Continuum of Support outlined above.

1. Children in 1st to 6th classes at or below the 10th percentile in literacy.
2. Children in 1st to 6th classes at or below the 10th percentile in numeracy.
3. Senior Infants, identified by the Class Teacher, through Teacher observation and MIST screening test.
4. Children in Junior Infants identified through teacher observation.
5. Support for children presenting with difficulties in literacy and numeracy in all classes.
6. Considerations relating to pupils for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL) are also included in decision-making.

Provision of Supplementary Teaching

- The primary work of the SET is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils identified above.
- The school year will be divided into two instructional terms of approximately 13-20 weeks each.
- The maximum caseload at any one time shall be 30 pupils as per Learning Support Guidelines.
- Classes will be intensive in terms of frequency.
- A system of withdrawal/in-class support/collaborative teaching will operate in response to the needs of the pupils.
- The SET in consultation with the principal decides the 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.

The Class Teacher and the SET meet to devise Individual Profile Learning Programmes (I.P.L.P.) in consultation with the principal and parents. The pupils involved also contribute to setting their own short-term targets.

Individual Learning Programme and Group Learning Programme

The individual learning plan/group learning plan will be in accordance with the criteria as advised in the Learning Support Guidelines, issued by the DES in 2000. The plan will address the pupils' full range of needs and will include as appropriate:

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

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

A review will take place at the end of instructional term. Following consultation the Learning Support Teacher and/or Class Teacher may meet parents to discuss the child's progress in the light of the review.

The SET will maintain the following documentation on file

1. Individual Profile Learning Programme
2. Short term planning and programme record
3. Diagnostic and screening test results
4. Samples of written work
5. Reading analysis records

Time-tabling

The provision of learning support is in addition to the regular class teaching in English and Maths. Every effort is made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curricular area each time they attend learning support. The provision of learning support may include withdrawal of pupils from their classroom and/or in-class support, if appropriate.

Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching

In general children should not stay for more than two years in Supplementary Teaching unless they are still at or below the 10th percentile. Following the end of instructional term review as detailed above, a decision is made to continue /discontinue the provision of supplementary teaching.

The criteria on which this decision is made include:

- Has the pupil achieved some/all of the learning targets set?
- Will the pupil be able to cope without additional support in the classroom learning context?

A decision to continue the provision of supplementary teaching will result in a revision of the pupil's Learning Plan. If a decision to discontinue supplementary teaching is made, the pupil's parents will be informed.

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

Communication Strategies

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

The various strands of this system include:

- Meeting parents of Junior Infant children to explain school policies and how parents and teachers can work together for the benefit of pupils.
- Informing parents of concerns regarding progress in school.
- Outlining the school's practice with regard to diagnostic testing and possible need for follow up procedures.
- Consultation between Class teacher and Learning Support teacher following a low score on a screening test
- The Principal is consulted regarding the Learning Support and Class teachers intention to contact parents following a low score on a screening test, with a view to seeking approval for diagnostic assessment and provision of supplementary teaching.
- On-going communication between the L.S.T and the class teacher.
- Regular communication between the L.S.T and parents.

Referral to Out-of-school Agencies

- The Special Education Co-Ordinator oversees the referral of pupils to outside agencies, e.g. Educational Psychologist.
- The Class Teacher and Special Education Co-Ordinator meet with the parents to discuss the need for the referral and to seek consent.
- The class teacher completes the necessary referral form in consultation with the Special Education Co-Ordinator/appropriate school personnel.
- The external professional meets with the pupil, parents, principal, class teacher and the Special Education Co-Ordinator as appropriate and assessment is conducted.
- This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are

considered and an appropriate response is agreed.

- Application is made to the SENO for the allocation of appropriate resources.
- Where concern arises regarding the manner or speed of the follow-through post assessment, such concern is pursued by the Special Education Co-Ordinator with the out-of-school agency.

Roles and Responsibilities

The implementation of our policy will be supported by the following people:

Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for the school's learning-support programme.

The Principal:

- assumes overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policy on learning support and special needs.
- works with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan on learning support and special needs and monitors it on a regular basis
- assumes direct responsibility for co-ordinating learning-support and special needs services.
- oversees the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need.
- keeps teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed in initiating referrals.
- encourages teachers to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of learning-support.
- encourages teachers to avail of relevant in-career development.

Special Education Co-Ordinator

- co-ordinate the school's approach to the provision of special education in line with DE circulars and guidelines
- liaise with all relevant school personnel
- co-ordinate assessments with outside agencies
- maintain stages of intervention spreadsheet
- make staff aware of any professional development opportunities in the area of special education

Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the learning needs of the pupils' they teach. Their responsibilities include:

- making parents aware of the concerns of the school about their child's progress
- outlining the schools practise with regard to diagnostic testing and follow up procedures

- where necessary attending meetings between SET and pupil's parents
- consulting and co-operating with SET on pupil's (I.P.L.P.)
- being alert to the possibility that some children may have a specific learning difficulty and bring it to the attention of the learning support teacher
- modifying class programmes to suit the needs of pupils
- where there is a classroom assistant, outlining their duties clearly for the instructional term

SET

- Assisting in the implementation of a broad range of whole school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to prevent learning difficulties
- Development of individual/group profiles and learning programmes for pupils who are selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with the class teacher and parents
- Maintaining short-term planning for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of learning support
- Delivering intensive early intervention programmes to pupils in Junior Classes
- Regular meetings with parents to discuss pupil's progress
- Providing teaching in English and/or Mathematics to pupils who experience low achievement
- Contributing to the development of policy at the whole school level and at the cluster level where applicable
- Liaising with class teacher on individual pupil's needs and progress
- Liaising with external agencies
- Maintaining a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and special educational needs (see appendix 1)
- Conducting diagnostic assessment,
- Maintaining and reviewing pupil records
- Liaising with Principal, teachers and parents.

Parents

Parents have a dual function in Learning Support:

- (1) in supporting the school and
- (2) in communicating with the school.

Supporting the School:

The role of the parent is to

- be involved in creating a positive attitude towards school.
- be involved with education plans by participating with students in activities such as language, maths and literacy.

Communicating with school:

The role of the parent is to

- discuss results of any pre-existing diagnostic assessment with class teacher who in turn inform the SET.
- inform school of any learning difficulties observed at home (also applies to progress of student)
- provide formal written permission for inclusion in the L.S programme
- meet with SET to discuss specific targets / activities if support is to be continued or discuss how future learning needs can be met at home if support is to be discontinued.
- maintain regular contact with school through parent/teacher meetings and through any other information sessions organised by the school.

Pupil

It is important for the students to have an input into the development, implementation and review of their own learning. By doing so they can:

- become more independent as learners
- become aware of different learning styles
- become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses or needs
- enjoy success and evaluate their progress
- excel at and enjoy many curricular and extracurricular activities.
- develop ownership of the skills and strategies taught during supplementary teaching and apply these strategies and skills in their mainstream class situation

Special Needs Assistant

The duties of the special needs assistant involve tasks of a non-teaching nature (DES circular 07/02) such as:

- assisting students when coming to school / going home in the evening.
- special assistance as necessary for pupils with particular difficulties.
- assisting on out of school visits, walks and similar activities.
- assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods, during and between classes
- a special needs assistant in the classroom has no role other than to assist the student with their subject following the guidance of the teacher.
- each student is individual, and the duties of the special needs assistant need to be modified to support the particular needs of the pupil concerned.

Board of Management

The Board of Management will:

- oversee the development, implementation, and review of school policy on special needs services in general.
- ensure that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the learning-support/resource teacher.
- provide a secure facility for storage of records relating to pupils in receipt of special needs and learning-support services

Provision of Resources

Resources for the provision of learning support include a variety of textbooks, library books and ancillary materials and oral language development materials.

A variety of testing materials are also in use which include standardised, diagnostic, screening, reading attainment, phonological awareness and Maths attainment.

Learning support resources will primarily be used in the learning support room.

The resources may be made available to class teachers following consultation with SET.

Success Criteria

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

- Improved standards of academic achievement with the pupil's individual learning programme.
- Enabling the discontinuation of the provision of learning support based on positive assessment results.
- Enhanced parental involvement in supporting their child's learning needs
- Increased opportunities for effective communication between school personnel in relation to pupils' progress.

Implementation and Review

The implementation of this policy will commence in September 2011. It will be reviewed at the end of every third school year, or as circumstances may warrant.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was circulated to all parents with children attending Lumcloon N.S. in early 2011. A period of three weeks was set aside for comments, suggestions etc. Following this, the policy was submitted to the Board of Management members for their consideration prior to the meeting of

13/04/2011. Following discussion and amendments, it was ratified by the Board of Management on this date. This policy was reviewed in spring 2023.


Review:

This policy will be reviewed in the final term of the school year 2024/2025 following an examination of trends in results of standardised testing, or as the need arises.

A copy of the policy will be made available to teachers, parents of Special Educational Needs pupils and other parents on request

Signed  Date 03/05/2023

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed  Date 03/05/2023

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management