

## **Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs**

### **Introductory Statement**

This policy was initially formulated on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2006 and last renewed by the Special Education Support team in June 2018.

### **Rationale**

- Because of continuing changes in special needs policy from the Department of Education and Skills, a unified policy is required for both low incidence and high incidence pupils.
- To assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child in our school.

### **Aims**

- To outline procedures and practices to be followed in relation to pupils with special needs.
- To outline our whole –school approach to teaching/learning in relation to pupils with special needs.
- To enable pupils with disabilities to avail of and benefit from appropriate learning experiences in order to reach their full potential.

### **Relationship to the Ethos of the School**

All in the Four Masters National School community fully support the ideal of inclusion. We believe that where practicable children should be educated with their peers. We acknowledge that this may not be the best setting for all children, but for the majority and given suitable resources, inclusion is the practice our school follows.

### **Change in allocating special teaching supports**

The Department has introduced a revised allocation model for all mainstream schools with effect from September 2018 *Special Education Circular 0013/2017*

A key principle underpinning this revised model is that special education teaching resources are utilised in the optimum manner to improve learning experiences and educational outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

### **Implementation of the Revised Allocation Model**

The following principles are used by Four Masters' N.S. to guide the implementation of the revised model for allocating special education teaching supports. They form a whole-school approach to provision for pupils with special educational needs in our school

## **Principles to guide the Implementation Process**

- Supports provided to pupils with special educational needs are based on identified needs and are informed by reviews of progress as outlined in the Continuum of Support Guidelines.
- The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all pupils in the classroom, including pupils with special educational needs.
- Special education teaching supports provided to schools are used solely for the support of pupils with identified special educational needs, including those pupils for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL).
- Pupils with the greatest levels of need have access to the greatest level of support, and whenever possible, these pupils are supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.
- The school establishes and maintains a core team of teachers to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. All members have the necessary experience and access to continuing professional development to support the diverse needs of pupils with special educational needs.

### **A three-step process to support pupils with special educational needs**

In the Four Masters' N.S. a three-step process is in place to guide identification, intervention and monitoring of outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

## **STEP 1 - THE CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT**

The Four Masters' N.S. uses the Continuum of Support framework set out by the Department of Education to assist in identifying and responding to pupils' needs. The Continuum of Support is a problem-solving model of assessment and intervention that enables the staff in the Four Masters' N.S. to gather and analyse data, as well as to plan and review the progress of individual pupils. Identification of educational needs is central to the new model. By using the Continuum of Support framework, the staff in the Four Masters' N.S. can identify pupils' educational needs, to include academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. The Continuum of Support enables schools to identify and respond to needs in a flexible way.

### *Level 1 - Classroom Support*

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

This is informed by:

- Parental consultation
- Teacher observation records
- Teacher-designed measures /assessments

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

### *Level 2 - School Support*

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

- Teacher observation records
- Teacher-designed measures / assessments
- Parental consultation

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

### *Level 3 - School Support Plus*

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

- Teacher observation and teacher-designed measures
- Parent and pupil consultation including interviews
- Functional assessment
- Results of standardised testing such as measures of cognitive ability; social, emotional and behavioural functioning; adaptive functioning etc. Data generated from this process are then used to plan an appropriate intervention and can serve as a baseline against which to map progress.

### **Educational planning**

Identification of needs, planning, target-setting and monitoring of outcomes are essential elements of an integrated and collaborative problem-solving process. In Four Masters' N.S., the process involves the class teacher, special education teachers, parents, the pupil and relevant professionals. These interventions reflect the priority learning needs of pupils, as well as building on their strengths and interests.

### **Support plans set out**

- the agreed targets
- the resources required
- the strategies for implementation, timeframe and review.

### **Student Support File**

A Student Support File enables the staff in the Four Masters' N.S. to plan interventions and to track a pupil's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates teachers in documenting progress and needs over time and assists them in providing an appropriate level of support to pupils, in line with their level of need. Following a period of intervention and review of progress, a decision is made as to the appropriate level of support required by the pupil. This may result in a decision to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or move to a higher or lower level of support.

## **STEP 2 – MEETING THE NEEDS**

### **The role of the class teacher**

Mainstream class teachers have first-line responsibility for the education of all pupils in

their classes. All mainstream class teachers in the Four Masters' N.S. implements teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. These include:

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

To cater for the range of learning needs in any class, mainstream class teachers regularly differentiate their lessons. This is achieved by:

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

### **The role of the Special Education Teacher (S.E.T.) The Role of the SET Team**

The activities of the Special Education Teacher should include both teaching and non-teaching duties. According to the *Learning Support Guidelines* (2000), "the particular balance that the learning support teacher achieves between supplementary teaching and consulting activities will depend on the specific circumstances of the school" (p.32).

The special needs teacher should include where possible:

- Assisting in the implementation of a broad range of whole-school strategies designed to enhance early learning and prevent learning difficulties.
- Developing student support files for those selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with class teacher and parents.
- Maintaining weekly planning and progress records / evaluations for groups or individuals.
- Delivering intensive early intervention programmes, supplementary teaching including a combination of team-teaching initiatives, co-operative teaching, early intervention and small group or individual support. Depending on the learning needs identified, a pupil with special educational needs may be supported at classroom level, or through mainstream classroom placement with additional teaching delivered through in-class or withdrawal support models.
- Providing teaching in English and /or Mathematics to pupils who experience low achievement and /or learning difficulties.

- Co-ordinating the implementation of whole school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching giving due consideration to:
  - The selection criteria specified in this Special Needs policy
  - Teachers' professional observation including evidence from relevant tests and checklists
  - Input of parents
- Providing advice to class teachers regarding Special Education Needs pupils in areas such as:
  - Individual pupil assessment
  - Programme planning
  - Curriculum differentiation
  - Teaching methodologies
- Contributing at school level to decision-making regarding the purchase of learning resources, books, games and ICT for use with children with special needs.
- Liaising with external agencies (NEPS psychologist, speech and language therapist, Child and Adolescent Centre, SENO) to arrange assessment and provision for pupils with special needs.
- Collaborating with the principal to discuss issues relating to the development and implementation of the school plan on special needs education and the provision of supplementary teaching.
- Coordinating the administration by class teachers of a whole-school screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and/or learning difficulties in English/Mathematics.
- Consulting with class teachers on the identification of pupils who may need diagnostic assessment following level 1 classroom support.

### **STEP 3 - MONITORING AND RECORDING OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

## **Target-setting**

- This stage of the process is informed by effective measurement of baseline performance, including the use of criterion-referenced tests and other methods of assessment (teacher-designed tests, checklists, samples of work, observation) that allow pupils to demonstrate their progress.
- Special education teachers, in consultation with class teachers, plan their interventions carefully to address pupils' priority learning needs and to achieve the targets identified in the relevant Continuum of Support plan.
- In Four Masters' N.S. targets are expressed in a way that is measurable and observable, and reflect the specific special educational needs of individual pupils
- The teachers endeavour to set targets which are achievable within a specified time frame and also challenge and build on existing knowledge and address pupils' holistic needs.
- Outcomes for pupils are routinely assessed, recorded and used to review progress. These outcomes are also used to inform the targets for the next phase of intervention. This leads to the establishment of specific targets to be achieved within a defined timeframe.

## **Monitoring**

- Monitoring outcomes is part of a dynamic process of identification, target-setting, intervention and review, which in turn leads to adjustments in support plans.
- The Student Support File provides the teachers in Four Masters' N.S. with a useful resource to support and record this process. It includes a Support Review Record to guide teachers when monitoring progress and reviewing outcomes with parents and pupils. We believe that such monitoring of progress, and subsequent adaptation of support plans, are key drivers of effective practice.
- In addition to monitoring outcomes at the individual level, we believe that it is also important to review outcomes at group, class and whole-school level. This review includes measures of attainment, communication, independence, attendance, social inclusion and well-being (for example, sense of belonging and connectedness to school) for pupils with special educational needs.

## **Allocating special education teaching resources to effectively meet needs**

An important aspect of the revised allocation model is that additional teaching supports are deployed according to identified needs, rather than being based on a diagnosis of disability. Schools may deploy special education teachers in a variety of ways in order to effectively meet pupils' needs (for example, in-class support, group withdrawal). Four Masters' N.S. aims to strike a balance between in-class support, group and individual support. Importantly, the level and type of support reflects the specific targets of individual pupils as set out in their support plans and are also informed by careful monitoring and review of progress. In this way, following a period of intervention, some pupils may no longer require additional teaching supports, some may require the same level, while others may require more intensive supports, thus progressing to the next level. When deploying teaching resources, Four Masters' N.S. recognises the essential need to maintain time for co-ordinating, planning and reviewing

activities which takes place one week at the beginning of September and February to ensure effective and optimal use of supports. Additionally, Four Masters' N.S acknowledges the fact that flexibility in terms of resource allocation is required to allow for emerging needs during the school year. In Four Masters N.S., the Principal endeavours to inform the S.E.T. Team and whole staff of C.P.D. opportunities, especially when a training opportunity arises for their particular caseload.

### **Planning the allocation of special education teaching supports**

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

numeracy difficulties, many pupils will have specific needs in such areas as oral language, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development and application to learning.

### **Teaching Supports for Pupils with Special Educational Needs contains the following areas:**

#### **Action 1: Identification of pupils with special educational needs**

- Review existing information on pupils' needs, using school-based data, and any information from parents and external professionals.
- Engage in additional screening and data gathering as required, using informal and formal assessment approaches (for example, teacher observations, information on social and emotional competence, standardised tests, diagnostic tests)
- Identify all pupils with special educational needs in the school.
- Match their needs to the appropriate level on the Continuum of Support.

#### **Action 2: Setting targets**

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

#### **Action 3: Planning teaching methods and approaches**

- The level and type of intervention required is identified to meet targets for each pupil on the Continuum of Support.
- Methodologies best suited to promoting meaningful inclusion such as differentiation, heterogeneous grouping, team-teaching and small group teaching are taken into consideration.
- The interventions and supports used are when possible evidence-informed.

#### **Action 4: Organising early- intervention and prevention programmes**

When allocating teaching resources, the management and staff of Four Masters' N.S. are mindful of the benefits of early-intervention and prevention programmes and allocate teaching resources as required, based on identified needs and school context. Based on identified needs, evidence-informed early- intervention/prevention programmes are chosen to address concerns. Time needed is identified and staffing commitment required. All early intervention programmes are carefully monitored to assess and record their impact on pupil progress, participation in learning and in school life. These programmes are implemented in an intensive manner, for the purpose intended and includes frequent opportunities for pupils to practise skills

#### **Action 5: Organising and deploying special education teaching resources**

The needs of pupils at School Support and School Support Plus levels are cross-referenced and Higher incidence needs that can be met by grouping are considered to ensure effective and efficient teaching and learning approaches. The teacher(s) that will cater for these groups/individuals are agreed and when and where the teaching will take place. When possible pupils with the greatest level of need will receive the greatest level of support from teachers with relevant expertise.

#### ***Action 6: Tracking, recording and reviewing progress***

The progress of all pupils in meeting their identified targets is monitored:

- At Whole-school and Classroom Support level by all teachers
- At the School Support and School Support Plus levels by class teachers and special education teachers. A record is kept of all pupils who receive supplementary teaching of any kind.
- Records of assessments will be kept in child's file in the SET's filing cabinet.
- Psychological reports exemptions from Irish certificates and standardised test results will be kept securely in principal's office.

This following section outlines the key elements of the inclusive whole-school approach to supporting pupils with special educational needs in Four Masters' N.S.

#### **Whole School Planning**

When implementing the revised allocation model to address the needs of pupils with special educational needs, Four Masters' N.S. has adopted a whole-school approach to programme planning and to the implementation of early-intervention and prevention programmes. In order to achieve this, Four Masters' N.S. has adapted their existing special educational needs policies to guide the new approach to the allocation of resources. A whole-school approach involves collaborative action by our school community (in consultation with parents, pupils, SNAs, class teachers, SETs, Principal) to improve pupil learning, behaviour and well-being. It encompasses a process of reflection, planning and review of policies and practices, and includes an evaluation of how pupils with special educational needs are identified by the school, the interventions that are put in place to meet their needs and how the outcomes of those interventions are measured and monitored.

#### **Other Roles and Responsibilities**

The role of supporting learning is a collaborative responsibility shared by all: the Board of Management, principal teacher, class teachers, special needs teachers, special needs assistants, parents and children.

#### **The Role of the Board of Management**

- Ensure that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are providing for special needs teachers.



- Provide adequate funds for the purchase of special needs materials. “Funds provided for these materials should not be limited to the special needs grant provided by the DES, (Learning Support Guidelines, p.47).
- Provide a secure facility for storage of records relating to pupils in receipt of special education

### **Role of School Principal**

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

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

### **The Role of the Special Needs Assistant**

- Attend to the care needs of the Special Education Needs child and help the child to become as independent and responsible as possible.
- Assist class teacher in implementing the learning plan as laid out in the Student Support File.
- Contribute to the Student Support File and participate in (some of the) review meetings for resource children.
- Preparation organisation and tidying of classroom/resource room and or other rooms used by Special Education Needs pupils.

### **The Role of Parents**

In Four Masters’ N.S., we believe that effective communication and engagement with parents is critically important in moving towards a needs-based approach to the allocation of additional teaching resources. This is enhanced when we consult parents in relation to their child’s needs and support plan. The Continuum of Support process and use of the Student Support File provides valuable opportunities for school personnel to engage with parents and to build a collaborative approach to identifying and responding to the needs of pupils with special educational needs.

Parents are consulted

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

- Provide a home environment where there are opportunities to participate together in language, literacy and mathematical activities.
- Support the work of the school by participating with their child in such activities as writing, shared reading, counting and measuring and maintaining a positive attitude towards school and school work.
- Ensure that their child is at school every day except if sick or for some other urgent reason.

## **The Role of the Pupil**

“The involvement of pupils in the development, implementation and review of their own learning programmes is an important principle underlining effective supplementary teaching” (*Learning Support Guidelines, p.54*). Depending on the maturity of the child, children would be included in setting short-and long-term learning targets and contribute to review of their progress.

### **Engagement with External Bodies and Agencies**

Support and guidance is available to teachers from external professionals such as NEPS Psychologists, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), the NCSE Support Service, the Inspectorate, and allied health professionals. The staff in Four Masters’ N.S. also endeavour to incorporate relevant recommendations from health professionals in developing support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support.

### **Transitions**

Good planning and support for transition helps to ensure the successful transfer of pupils from primary school to post-primary school and pre-school and mainstream settings. Links are already established with ‘transition’ schools in the area for our pupils. Meetings with these schools have helped ease the anxiety levels for the children in our school.

In consultation with our NEPS psychologist we try to ensure that all Low-Incidence pupils have an up to date Educational Assessment before they transfer to Secondary School.

Where appropriate parents of pupils with special needs are reminded at the beginning of Fifth Class to identify a Secondary School that would accommodate their child’s needs.

### **Continuing Professional Development (C.P.D.)**

Four Masters’ N.S. has established and intends to maintain skilled Special Education Support Teams to guide provision. Since all teachers have responsibility for teaching pupils with special educational needs, the management of Four Masters’ N.S. encourages all staff members to engage in appropriate CPD to develop the capacity of our school to meet the educational needs of all pupils.

Any teacher who wishes to become a Special Education Teacher must have a Higher Diploma in Special Education or be willing to take part in the Higher Diploma in Special Education course (e.g. St. Angela’s College).

### **Enrolment of Children with Special Needs (refer to enrolment policy)**

Parents are requested to fill in a section on the enrolment form to indicate any special needs their child may have of which they are aware. The parents then meet with the principal who requests copies of reports, assessments, etc. The school will contact the SENO, NEPS Psychologist and any other relevant agency to ensure that the school is prepared to meet the individual child's needs

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

- a) The best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under the EPSEN Act, or
- b) The effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated.” (EPSEN ACT).

Therefore, the Board of Management shall decide, taking into consideration the education of children already in the school, if the school can provide adequately for additional children with special needs in the current situation. Any health and safety issues arising from the enrolment of a child with special needs will be dealt with under school policy on these issues and amended as the need arises.

### **Four Masters National School uses the following standardised tests:**

**NRIT (Non Reading Intelligence Test)** is administered annually in Second Class.

Drumcondra Revised Reading, Spelling and Maths Tests.

At present administration of these tests takes place in May of each school year for First class to Sixth class.

Senior Infants take the Drumcondra Tests of Early Literacy and Numeracy.

The SET team will discuss the recorded results with the staff and carry out further screening tests and / or diagnostic assessments where it is deemed necessary.

Written parental permission is required for children to attend SET

### **Record-Keeping**

A full record of psychological reports are kept in a locked cabinet in the Principal's office. Other reports and records of meetings are kept in the individual student's file in a secure location (in a locked filing cabinet) in the Principal's office. All

information is managed in accordance with the directives of both the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.

## **Communication**

- The BOM will be kept informed of the SEN provision on a regular basis by the Principal.
  - SEN issues will appear on the agenda of staff meetings and Post holders meetings when necessary.
- **Parents:**

When pupils are selected for supplementary teaching (level 2) it is necessary to advise parents of this:

- To clarify the child's learning needs
- To clarify the role of the parent in relation to those needs
- To obtain a signed consent form

This communication may take the form of a letter or a meeting/phone call. At the meeting the parents will be given the opportunity to discuss progress and teachers will outline ways to support the child's learning and to give parents an opportunity to contribute to the Student Support File. The following are ways the parents can support their child:

- Developing child's oral language through discussion
- Motivating child to read more
- Creating a home environment where literacy can thrive
- Selecting books that interest child
- Counting, measuring and other activities involving number

The Special Education Needs teachers will formally meet the parents for a second time at the Parent/Teacher Meetings.

- **Class Teacher:**

It is necessary to create a regular time slot for collaboration with the class teacher:

- Drawing up Student Support File
- Discussing progress/lack of progress

- Application of learning targets to classroom situation
- Carry out error analysis to pinpoint specific areas of difficulty
- Setting up prevention /intervention systems e.g. shared reading or reading buddies

*(Ideally the principal will provide class supervision cover to allow this collaboration to happen and SET will draw up timetable).*

### **One-to One Teaching Activities**

Any activity which involves a child to staff member (teacher or SNA) ratio of 1:1, should take place in a room with a glass panel window on the door for visibility. Otherwise the door of the room in which they are working should be left open for the duration. Any blinds etc, on the glass panel on the door, should be opened for the duration also. Only staff members (who are all vetted appropriately), should engage in 1:1 activities.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that any visitors who are to work with children on a 1:1 basis are appropriately vetted (e.g. HSE nurse, Psychologist, Photographer etc.). The procedure outlined above will be followed in these cases also.

### **Timetable:**

The SET in consultation with the class teacher draw up the timetable at the beginning of the school year.

Changes have to be accommodated every term due to choir practise, sporting activities and school events.

Consultation and collaboration time is included in the timetable.

### **Resources:**

- A good supply of resources has been built up over the past number of years which are added to on an annual basis.
- An audit of resources is done on a regular basis.
- It is policy to keep a record of materials borrowed from the SET room by the SET team.
- It is policy that class teachers have limited access to reading books so that SEN pupils do not identify reading books with different age groups or levels.

### **Communication, Monitoring and Reviewing of SEN policy**

This policy will be communicated to staff and the school community as appropriate and will be subjected to regular review. In accordance with the systematic cycle of review of policies adopted in Four Masters' National School, it will be reviewed initially after one year and then every three years, unless there is a compelling reason to review it earlier.

**Ratification and review**

This policy will be reviewed once every year or more often if deemed necessary.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting in October 2018.

Signed: John Britton (Principal)      Date: October 2018

Signed: Fr. Keogan (Chairperson)      Date: October 2018