



St. Louis Secondary School, Monaghan.



Principal: Ms Margaret Conlon

Deputy Principal: Mr James Sherry.

Tel: 047 81422

Email: admin@stlouismonaghan.com

Web: stlouismonaghan.com

SEN POLICY 2021 (Draft)

Mission Statement

Our school recognises that each pupil who enrolls is unique and has different gifts as well as different needs. It is our wish that our pupils leave us with enhanced self-confidence and with life skills and attitudes which enable them to lead lives that may contribute to the betterment of society. We recognise that a pupil's development is closely linked to a good self-image and so we strive to present the school's total curriculum in such a manner as to allow all to realise their full potential. We see ourselves as working in partnership with parents to develop the gifts and to meet the needs of all. We regard our school as an educational establishment characterised by care and justice.

Aims

The aim of the Special Educational Needs Department in St Louis Secondary School Monaghan is to identify those students in need of various types of support, such as emotional/behavioral, those with learning difficulties, and the exceptionally gifted. The objective is to enable all students to reach their full potential by adopting a holistic, whole-school approach.

Promoting Wellbeing

One of the key principles of the new Junior Cycle is Wellbeing. "The student experience contributes directly to their physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing and resilience. Learning takes place in a climate focused on the

St Louis Secondary School, Glen Road, Monaghan H18 AO79

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collective wellbeing of school, community, and Society". In St Louis', we are supporting the journey of the student towards being Responsible ("...enabling them to make the right choices..."), Connected ("...understanding how their actions and interactions impact on their own wellbeing..."), Resilient ("...feeling confident in themselves and having coping skills to deal with life's challenges...believing that with the effort they can achieve..."), Respected ("...having positive relationships with friends, peers, and teachers...feeling listened to and valued...") and Aware ("...being aware of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and being able to make sense of them...being aware of their personal values and able to think through their decisions...being aware of themselves as learners and knowing how they can improve...") all of which have been identified as indicators of wellbeing.

Each year a member of the SEN team is a part of the CARE team and the Wellbeing Committee.

Rational and the Legal Context

This policy is prepared with reference to the following legislation:

- The Education Act 1998 (EA)
- The Education Welfare Act 2000 (EWA) and Equality Act 2004
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
- The Equal Status Acts 2000 -2011 (ESA)
- The Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act 2004 (EPSEN)
- The Freedom of Information Acts 1997-3003
- The Data Protection Act 2003
- The Disability Act 2005

This policy is drafted in the context of:

- The guidelines published by the NCSE
- The guidelines on the Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools (NEPS)
- The guidelines published by the Special Educational Needs Support Services (SESS)
- New Junior Cycle Framework

This policy applies to all students attending St Louis Monaghan and who have learning support/special educational needs, either short or long term.

Working Definition of Special Education Needs “Special Education Needs” means in relation to a person, 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 the definition in the Act does not refer to students with emotional or behavioral difficulties, section 7(4)(b) of the Equal Status Act 2000 does indicate a category of special needs in this case and the school will be mindful of such students also in providing for special needs.

A Continuum of Support

The school recognises that special educational needs occur along with a continuum, from mild to severe and from transient to long-term. Therefore our response to students is also offered along a continuum from whole school and preventative approaches to individualized and specialist approaches. The continuum of support encompasses a graduated solution-orientated framework of assessment and intervention in schools, comprised of three distinct school-based processes which are summarised below.

- **SUPPORT FOR ALL** is a process of prevention, effective mainstream teaching, and early identification. These systems are available to all students and effectively meet the needs of most students.
- **SCHOOL SUPPORT (FOR SOME)** is an assessment and intervention process which is directed to some students, or groups of students who require some additional support.
- **SCHOOL SUPPORT PLUS (FOR A FEW)** is generally characterised by more intensive and individualised supports. This level of intervention is for students with complex and /or enduring needs and relatively few students will need this level of support.

Aims of the Special Needs (S.E.N.) Policy in St Louis Monaghan

The principal aim of Special Education in St Louis Monaghan is to provide a positive learning

environment, which will foster the academic, social, and emotional development of students with learning difficulties and enable each to realise their individual potential.

Learning Support provision also seeks to:

Enable pupils of all abilities to avail of and benefit from an appropriate education.

Provide students with consistent opportunities to experience success.

Provide supplementary teaching and additional support in literacy and numeracy.

Involve parents in the support of their daughter's education.

Promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of a whole school policy on learning support for pupils.

Protect and enhance the self-esteem of the learner.

The school hopes to achieve the following by updating the SEN policy:

To include the most recent best practice in SEN. To incorporate best practice guidelines in SEN. To reflect on the most recent recommendations, most particularly the Continuum of Support at Post-Primary Schools (NEPS), recent Child Protection legislation, and GDPR 2018. To outline our whole school approach to teaching/learning in relation to pupils with SEN. To set out procedures for the enrolment of students with SEN in the school. To assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child in our school. Ensure that students with SEN are educated in an inclusive environment.

Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the specific needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.

- Ensure that SEN is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.
- Ensure that students with SEN are offered a broad, balanced, and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Set high standards for students with SEN and provide them with appropriate guidance, encouraging them to achieve their full potential.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with SEN.
- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at home and at school.
- To outline procedures and practices which will be followed in relation to supporting the learning of pupils with SEN.

- To establish communication structures for the involvement of all the partners in the education of pupils with SEN

The Context of the School's Admission Policy

Special Education Needs (S.E.N.) St Louis Monaghan, in compliance with its Mission Statement and keeping in mind the Louis ethos and values of the school, welcomes applications from students with S.E.N. The school operates an open admissions policy; promoting equality of access, participation, and benefit for all in as far as the school can fulfill the needs of an individual student.

The Board of Management is committed to ensuring full entitlement and access for pupils with special educational needs to high-quality education with a broad, balanced, and relevant curriculum so that they can reach their full potential and enhance their self-esteem. This is consistent with the provisions of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, Section 2, which provides that “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 in accordance with any assessment carried out under this act, or

(b) The effective provision of education with whom the child is to be educated.

The Board of Management needs to be aware of any special needs as early as possible so that these needs can be assessed and addressed if possible. The Principal in conjunction with the LS teacher and parents, forwards all relevant information received, to the National Council for Special Education Needs (N.C.S.E.) who allocate resources based on the Department of Education and Skills policy.

In making provision for special needs students the Board of Management needs to know whether the incoming student has had access to any of the following resources:

- Special Needs Assistant
- A Special Class
- Help, for specific needs, from any Resource Teacher

- Assistance with behavior modification
- Psychological Assessment –report to be provided
- Any additional resources to help with their special needs
- Help in areas including visual or hearing impairment, general learning disability or emotional disturbance
- Student support file copy from Primary School to be provided.
- Any resource in relation to travel or mobility etc.
- Any resource not listed above

Note: if an expert report is provided, it should include a workable strategy for addressing the needs, allowing for the resources available to the school. Having gathered all the relevant information and professional documentation, the school will assess how the special needs of the students can be met.

It may take some time for the Department of Education and Skills to process such applications. Parents are strongly advised to inform the school as early as possible and discuss their particular situation well in advance of their child's -re that "teachers and other relevant employees of the school are aware of the importance of identifying children and students who have special educational needs"

Access to Learning Support

The following groups of students may qualify for learning support in the school:

- Students who have had a psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support/Resource teaching.
- Students who have not been assessed but who display profound difficulties in their Entrance Assessments (below the 10th percentile) may be offered Learning Support. Parents of these students will be consulted.
- Students who are identified by teachers, parents, or who request it themselves during the year may be accommodated if school resources allow.
- Students who are in receipt of Learning Support hours may need to be assessed in school by the LS team for the purposes of determining how best to support their individual learning needs.
- These assessments will consist of both formal and informal assessments

- Informal assessment will include but will not be limited to writing samples, maths samples, learning style, and in-class observations.
- All assessment results are private and confidential to each student and their parents/guardians.
 - Students with English as an Additional Language Needs (EAL)The school through its normal operating procedures shall ensure that adequate additional teaching and resource support is applied for and allocated as per the regulations of the Department of Education and Science.

Modes of provision of Learning Support

In-class support in the form of co-teaching is used within class groups. Individual Withdrawal is used only where a student requires specialised individual support. Small-Group Withdrawal is the preferred method of provision with most students in resource and learning support getting their allocation in small groups. Differentiation within Mainstream Classroom. Reduced Timetable. A small number of students whom it is deemed after consultation with the National Educational Psychological Service (N.E.P.S.) Psychologists, parents, and teachers who cannot sustain a full curriculum, have their timetable reduced. In so far as is possible, extra learning support is provided.

Access to Psychological Reports

Individual reports will be kept on each student with S.E.N. Information in the files include psychological reports, results from entrance assessments, correspondence between the school, parents, and other relevant agencies, and applications for support and concessions. Files are maintained by the Learning Support Coordinator and access is afforded to the following personnel-the School Principal, the Deputy Principal, members of the S.E.N. Department, the Year Heads and the Guidance Counsellor. Beyond these individuals, information regarding special needs is communicated to teachers on a need-to-know basis. In accordance with section 14.(1)(d) of the EPSEN Act 2004 the school “shall ensure that all relevant teachers and other relevant employees of the school are aware of the S.E.N. of the students” Information is provided to teachers at the beginning of the year. Other newly identified students are notified to the teachers as the year progresses.

Involvement of the Educational Partners

Role of the Board of Management

- To ensure that a policy is in place and that it is reviewed regularly.
- To make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.
- To ensure that the school meets its requirements for the inclusion of S.E.N students within the current legal framework.

Role of the Principal and Deputy Principal

- On behalf of the Trustee and the Board of Management, the Principal has responsibility for all aspects of the day-to-day management of policy and provision for students with special educational needs.
- To inform the Board of Management of issues that are relevant to S.E.N.
- To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources including the allocation of hours and funds
- To actively promote a whole school approach to learning support and S.E.N and to make all staff aware of their responsibilities in this area.

Role of the SEN Co-Ordinator

- To co-ordinate/devise a school SEN plan.
- To create and maintain a school register of students with SEN.
- To communicate the needs of students to teachers.
- To assist in the identification of students with SEN.
- To ensure that support plans are in place for students with SEN.
- To advise teachers of the recommendations made in professional assessments relating to individual students.
- To assist the Principal in the allocation of resources.
- To process applications for Reasonable Accommodations at State Exams (RACE).
- To provide RACE in-house exam where possible given the resources available.
- To liaise with outside professionals.
- To meet with parents in order to plan and review interventions.
- To assist in co-ordinating the administration of standardised assessments.
- To ensure that systems are in place for the referral of students by teachers, parents, etc.
- To be a member of the Student Support Team.
- To advise and collaborate with SNA's around the care needs of relevant students.
- To facilitate weekly meetings of the SEN team.

Role of the Guidance Counsellor

- To liaise on an ongoing basis with the other members of the S.EN. Team and Pastoral Care Team as relevant matters arise.
- To provide a range of services to all students, including careers information, referral services, etc. with an awareness of the S.E.N. of students.
- To work together with the L.S. coordinator in conducting the assessments of incoming first years and other students new to the school.
- To advise the Principal of any matters arising from such assessments.
- To support students who have been referred.
- To advise on supports available at the third level for S.E.N. students and to assist students in accessing these supports.

Role of the Learning Support Coordinator

- To liaise with the Guidance teacher, feeder schools and parents in identifying new S.E.N. pupils.
- To work with the Principal and Deputy Principal in the allocation of students to Learning Support teaching groups
- To be responsible for the submission of N.C.S.E. forms.
- To be responsible for liaising with external service providers i.e. N.E.P.S. and the Special Needs Organiser (S.E.N.O)
- To coordinate the Reasonable Accommodations (R.A.) for the State Examinations.
- To organise assessments with NEPS.
- To work with Special Needs Assistants
- To communicate with the Principal, Deputy Principal and staff any information concerning S.E.N. students as required.
- To be available, by appointment to meet parents to discuss and advise of the special educational needs of their daughters.

Role of the Learning Support Teachers

- To teach individual and small groups of students requiring learning support.
- To liaise with the coordinator in the provision of support to these students.
- To liaise with subject teachers and other departments on employing differentiated teaching methods and resources in their subject teaching.
 - To produce review of students progress in terms of targets set and bring to the termly meeting for Learning Support.
 - To Liaise with the NEPS psychologist in relation to implementation of best practice.
 - To Liaise with parents as regards student support plans and progress.

Role of the Special Needs Assistants

- To carry out duties assigned by the Principal in accordance with Circular 10/76
- To cater to the needs of the S.E.N students including assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting, and general hygiene.
- To provide special assistance where necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. writing typing etc.
- To provide assistance on out-of-school activities as required.
- To assist in the organisation and procurement of items needed for class e.g. textbooks, P.E. gear and in the organisation of the student's locker.
- To assist the teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during break and lunchtimes.
- To encourage each pupil to become more independent and self-reliant.

General Teaching Staff

- To make provision for students with learning support /special needs in their class and subject areas.
- To be part of a whole-school approach in relation to S.E.N as well as literacy and numeracy.
- To make provision for differentiation of work for S.EN. Students. Parental Involvement
- To work in positive partnership with the school and other agencies
- To support and encourage their child in her education.

Involvement of Parents (DES Circular 14/2017)

The school recognises its responsibility under section 14 of the EPSEN Act 2004, with regard to informing and consulting with parents on all matters relating to their child's education. Parents and transition to and transfer from the post-primary school. The quality of a child's experience in making the transition to post-primary education can determine how they will settle in school. Parents can provide valuable support to a child with SEN while the child is making the transition.

St Louis Secondary School provides support to parents by:

- Liaising with parents prior to transfer.
- Informing parents about the range of extracurricular activities available for first-year students so that the parents can encourage their child to participate.
- Having an anti-bullying policy and keeping parents informed of issues relating to bullying.
- Encouraging parents to contact the SEN co-ordinator.

Parents and the transmission of information The parents of a child with SEN can provide valuable information in relation to their child's learning difficulties and learning preferences. The SEN team seeks relevant professional reports from parents of students with SEN with the acceptance of a place in the school. St Louis, at all times, recognises the parent/guardian as the primary educator of the child. Parents and home-school links The school provides parents with regular reports on the progress of their child.

- The school journal is used for home-school communication, and parent-teacher meetings are held once a year for face-to-face communication.
- Students receive a written school report at Christmas and Summer
- The SEN co-ordinator and special educational teachers are available to meet parents on request.
- Parents help the school by keeping the teachers informed of the progress/difficulties they observe in their child's learning as they progress through the school.

Student Involvement

- To contribute to the drawing up of learning programs and the setting of learning targets for themselves.
- To contribute to the review of learning programs.
- To cooperate with the agreed program and its evaluation by participation in appropriate tests and assessments.

Links with Outside Agencies

The EPSEN Act 2004 assures interlinking provision between the National Council for Special Education Needs (NCSE) , the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) and the Health Service Executive (HSE) and school.

In accordance with this act, the school will work with the local S.E.N.O, the local N.E.P.S. psychologist, the visiting teachers for the Blind and Hearing impaired and any other relevant professional in providing an integrated response to the needs of any particular student. It may be necessary to hold case meetings with relevant professionals with the permission and knowledge of the student's parents (and their attendance) in order to determine the best approach and provision for the students in question. Notes from such meetings will be recorded and maintained in the student's file.

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

At present individual learning plans have been put in place for a small number of students in the school (School Support Plus for a Few). With the full implementation of the EPSEN Act 2004 these and all future plans will be referred to as individual education plans. These plans will be put in place following consultation between the school, parents, students and relevant bodies outside the school. Their objective is to bring about effective teaching and learning and improved outcomes for students with S.E.N. Each IEP will be prepared in accordance with the Guidelines on the Individual Education Planning Process (2006) as issued by the N.C.S.E.

Transfer from Primary School

The transfer of information from primary level to post-primary level is vital to the successful support of students with SEN. At the open night, parents are informed about support for students with SEN, pastoral care structures and information regarding RACE. The SET team are available to speak to parents regarding any concerns on the open night. The Special Needs Co-ordinator will also: Visit/contact the feeder primary school to collect up-to-date information. Liaise with primary school and parents of students with more specific needs. Meet with parents/guardians of students with SEN. Arrange a meeting with the primary resource/learning support teacher. Apply for SNA support/assistive technology for relevant students.

Once accepted to St Louis:

- All incoming first-year students take a Cognitive Ability Test; CAT4. These tests can be used to identify the strengths and needs of incoming students with SEN. This data is used to help identify students who may need additional support including exceptionally able students.
- The SEN team will take into consideration the students learning styles and strengths.
- The SEN team will create learning targets for each student with SEN. These targets are monitored and once achieved, new targets are set.
- At the beginning of the new academic year, all students on the SEN register are reviewed in terms of the level of support needed and curriculum load. Students transferring into other year groups.

When a student is accepted into a year group other than First Year, information is sought from their previous school (Educational Psychological Report, school reports, attendance, etc.). This is the responsibility of the

Principal/Deputy Principal. Any relevant information is then passed to the Year Head and the Special Needs Co-ordinator.

Provisions for Students with emerging needs.

For students with emerging needs, including the exceptionally able, the concern may have been identified through the whole school screening and monitoring systems (CAT4, informal observation, parental concern). Teachers are asked to complete a referral form for students who they have a concern about that focuses on the student's behavior, academic performance, homework, etc. Some students will need further individual or diagnostic testing to identify the nature of their needs (both learning and behavioral).

Models of SEN provision

In assessing and deciding which students need to be in receipt of supplementary teaching and which students may benefit from support within the mainstream context the following options are considered:

- Curricular differentiation
- Team teaching/Co-operative Teaching.
- In-class support/differentiation.
- Inclusion of SNA in specific classes.
- Small group withdrawal.
- Individual withdrawal.
- Organisational skills.
- Social Skills.

The period of intervention recommended for each student is dependent on the nature and extent of their individual need. The decision on withdrawal of students versus co-teaching is based on the extent of the needs and levels of the students. The duration of provision is varied and is reviewed throughout the intervention. There are cases where support is needed on a short-term basis, after which the student is in a position to recommence with the regular curriculum. All decisions in this regard are discussed with the parents/guardians, class teachers, the student, principal, and guidance counsellor. Resources SEN teachers and students have access to approximately four resource rooms which include computers. There are also two computer rooms in the school and they are utilised to cater for any student wishing to engage in ICT and follow a typing programme. All mainstream classrooms have PC's and overhead projectors.

Exemptions from Irish and Foreign Languages

- Incoming first-years with Irish and Foreign Language exemptions are noted.
- Certificates of exemption from the study of Irish and Foreign Languages must be submitted with the enrolment application.
- The guidelines set down by the Department of Education and Skills will be strictly adhered to (Circular M10/94) (Circular 0053/2019) http://www.education.ie/en/Circular-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/ppc10_94.pdf
<https://assets.gov.ie/27473/c10cb646f6a14074b6d02d54b0ab3d1b.pdf>
- Where possible, withdrawal for Special Education provision is arranged for SEN students who do not study Irish, during Irish class. This is not guaranteed and is limited by timetable restrictions and staff availability and completed in accordance with the Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools, Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (2007) and with parental consent.
- Applications for Irish exemptions on the grounds of SEN are made by the SEN co-ordinator and signed by the Principal.
- A revised circular was introduced by DES in September 2019 – Circular 0053/2019 sets out the exceptional circumstances in which consideration may be given to granting a student an exemption from the study of Irish.

Summary

This policy is based on the following key principals

- All students with learning support /special educational needs will be identified as early as possible.
- There will be a positive partnership with parents with regard to the identification of and provision for students with learning support/special educational needs.
- There will be a whole school approach to S.EN. issues in the school.
- The school will encourage inclusive education for students with learning support /special educational needs.
- There will be close cooperation with all agencies to ensure a multi-agency approach to support.
- There will be a regular review of policy and practice in relation to all issues pertaining to learning support /special educational needs in the school.

Reviewed by SEN Co-ordinator, Rachel Mc Nally, November 2021.

