

29th Sep 2025

St. Joseph's National School

Moneygall NS

17003A

Learning Support & Special Education Teaching (SET) Policy

Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other interested persons on the provision of effective learning support to pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties and to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act, 1998.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

In our school we are dedicated to helping each child to achieve his/her individual potential. The provision of a quality system of learning support is integral to this commitment.

Aims

Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

1. Facilitate pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level.
2. Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning.
3. Enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners within their own ability.
4. Involve parents in supporting their children's learning.
5. Promote collaboration among teachers.

Guidelines

The following procedures are being implemented as a means of responding effectively to pupils' individual learning needs.

1. Prevention Strategies

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

- development and implementation of agreed approaches to language development e.g. phonological awareness and to the teaching of other aspects of the English and Maths programmes e.g. Maths language; Tables, and Problem Solving
- class-based early intervention by the class teacher resulting in the provision of additional individualised support;
- promotion of parental involvement through their attendance at an induction meeting for the parents of incoming Junior Infants, the provision of the 'Tips for Parents' booklet, the arrangement of formal and informal Parent/Teacher Meetings and the delivery of programmes for parents e.g. Forward Together. Implementation of Paired Reading programmes; and ongoing observation and assessment.

2. Early Intervention Programme

- Early intervention begins for pupils in Senior Infants in response to the class teacher's observations and/or the results of the MIST (Middle Infant Screening Test) or Group Reading Screening Test (GRT).
- The school year is divided into two instructional terms.
- Taking account of the level of provision of learning support to our school, lessons take place at least three times per week and are of a thirty to forty minutes duration.
- The Learning Support Teacher decides the size of groups, taking into account the individual learning needs of pupils and the overall caseload.
- One-to-one teaching is provided where necessary.
- In-class support is used where possible.
- Lessons focus on the development of phonemic awareness, word identification strategies, oral work, silent reading, comprehension skills and mathematical procedures and concepts.
- Literacy-Lift Off has been used in 1st/2nd Class and is scheduled for the Infant room for the Summer Term. Novel Groups are timetabled for classes from 1st Class upwards. Team Teaching takes place for support in literacy and maths in every class when additional support teachers can be timetabled planned for different terms during the year.

3. Selection of Pupils for Supplementary Teaching

- From Senior Infants upwards, all pupils are screened annually using standardised tests. The tests in use are MIST and or GRT, Drumcondra Early Literacy and Maths assessments, Jolly Phonics assessment, Sigma-T and Drumcondra English Reading and spelling assessment.
- Priority for Learning Support is given to those pupils who perform at or below the 12th percentile, excluding in the main pupils who have a Student Support Plus Plan.
- In the case of pupils performing at or below the 12th percentile, the screening process is followed by a consultative meeting between the class teacher, the parents and the Learning Support teacher concerning the pupil's performance.
- Parental consent is sought for the conducting of diagnostic assessment. The tests in use (See appendix 1) are administered by the SET team. A further consultative meeting then takes place to consider the outcomes of the assessment.

4. Provision of Supplementary Teaching

- The primary work of the Learning Support Teacher/Special Education Teacher (SET) is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils identified in section 3 above.
- The class teacher and SET meet to review pupil profile, review and discuss classroom support plans and devise Student Support Plans (SSPs) and/or Group Education Plans (GEPs) in consultation with the Principal and parents. The pupils involved also contribute to setting their own short-term targets.
- Such plans address the pupils' full range of needs and include:
 - details from the pupils' class teachers;
 - _ assessment results;
 - _ parental consultation,
 - _ basic needs checklist
 - _ learning environment checklist
 - _ pupil consultation
 - _ 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; and
 - _ home support activities.
- Each plan is monitored through teacher observation, the keeping of planning and progress records and through children's own checklists and flow charts.
- A detailed review takes place at the end of each instructional term. The Learning Support Teacher and/or the class teacher meet the parents to discuss their child's progress in the light of the review.
- The SET maintains the following documentation in individualised files:
 - individual profile and learning programme;
 - _ short-term planning and programme records;
 - _ other records
 - _ samples of written work; and
 - _ reading analysis running records.
- A system of withdrawal and/or in-class support operates in response to the needs of the individual pupil.

5. Procedures for Continuing/Discontinuing Pupils

- Following the end of instructional term review as detailed in section 4 above, a decision is made to continue/discontinue the provision of supplementary teaching.
- The criteria on which this decision is based include:
 - _ has the pupil achieved some/all of the learning targets set?
 - _ will the pupil be able to cope independently/semi-independently in the classroom learning context?

- The decision-making process involves consultation between the class teacher, the Learning Support Teacher and the pupil's parents and account is also taken of the overall Learning Support demands in the school. A decision to continue the provision of supplementary teaching will result in a revision of the pupil's SSP.

6. Communication Strategies

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

- class teacher and SET following a low score on a screening test;
- Principal and/or SET and/or class teacher and parents following a low score on a screening test, including the seeking of approval for diagnostic assessment and provision of supplementary teaching; and
- ongoing communication between the Learning Support Teacher and the class teacher throughout the instructional term.

7. Parental Involvement

- Regular communication takes place between SET and parents.
- Specific support is available to parents to assist them to work effectively with their child. This support is available from the SET.
- Parents are actively involved in the achievement of the targets set for their child e.g. through shared reading.
- The parents and SET meet at the end of each instructional term (end of January and end of May) to review the child's progress.

8. Referral to Out-of-School Agencies

- The Principal/SET co-ordinates the referral of pupils to outside agencies e.g. Educational Psychologist.
- The Principal and/or SET and/or class teacher 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 appropriate school personnel.
- The external professional visits the school to meet with the pupil, parents, Principal, class teacher and SET (as appropriate) and the assessment is conducted.
- This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed.
- Where concern arises regarding the manner or speed of the follow-through post assessment, such concern is pursued by the Principal with the out-of-school agency concerned.

9. Provision of Resources

- Resources for the provision of Learning Support include a variety of textbooks, library books and ancillary materials and oral language programmes e.g. Chatterbox. A variety of testing materials are also in use which include standardised, diagnostic, screening, non-reading intelligence, reading experience, reading attainment phonological awareness and Maths attainment.

- Learning Support resources will primarily be used in the Learning Support unit. These resources may be made available to class teachers following consultation with the SET.

10. Timetabling

- The provision of Learning Support is in addition to the regular class teaching in English and Maths.
- Effort is made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curricular area each time they attend learning support. A flexible approach to timetabling is adopted by class teachers while class disruption is minimised.
- The provision of learning support includes withdrawal of pupils from their classroom and in-class support.

11. SET Work Schedule

- The work schedule of the Learning SET, in addition to providing supplementary teaching, may include the overseeing of early intervention and prevention programmes, the conducting of diagnostic assessment, the maintenance and review of pupil records, the co-ordination of special needs services and consultation with teachers and parents.
- In recognition of this varied role, the caseload of the SET will be regularly reviewed.

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 within the pupil's individual learning programme;
- enabling of the discontinuation of the provision of SET based on positive assessment results;
- enhanced parental involvement in supporting their child's learning needs; and
- increased opportunities for effective communication between school personnel in relation to pupils' progress.

The achievement of these success criteria will be assessed through feedback from teachers, pupils and parents.

Roles and Responsibilities

The implementation of our policy will be supported as follows:

<u>Roles</u>	<u>Person(s) Responsible</u>
Co-ordinate SET and Special Needs services	Principal/Deputy Principal
Provide supplementary teaching, conduct diagnostic assessment, maintain and review pupil records, and liaise with Principal, teachers and parents	SET

First line responsibility for the pupil 's learning needs	Class Teacher
Support for and participation in their child's learning	Parent
Development, implementation and review of their own learning	Pupil
Oversee implementation and review of the Learning Support policy and the provision of adequate resources, accommodation and storage	Board of Management

Implementation and Review

It is intended that it will be implemented in full from this date on. The policy will be reviewed at the end of every third school year.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was reviewed and approved by Staff in September 2025.

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management in Term 1, 2025/2026.

It was ratified by the Board of Management on Date:

Signed:  Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: Jane Finnegan Principal

Date: 29 / 09 / 2025

Appendix 1

Learning Support Resources 2025/ 2026

Testing

Maths:

- Sigma — T
- Ballard and Westwood Timed Arithmetic Test
- Belfield

Literacy:

Attainment testing:

- Parallel spelling
 - Micra T
 - Drumcondra
 - Diagnostic Testing:
 - Jackson Phonics
 - Test for Phonological Awareness
 - MIST
 - GRT
 - Teacher designed class tests
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Literacy Resources:

- Alpha to Omega 5th edition
- Toe by Toe/DCode & NCode Programmes 1-8/SNIP Spelling Programme for pupils with Dyslexia.
- Alpaca Software licence for Infants
- PM Testing/Bench Marking Literacy Levels 1-30 Box
- Newell Literacy Programme 1 -6
- Easy-Learn — phonics 1-3
- Learning Targets for literacy 'phonics and spelling'
- Seven aspects of the spoken language
- Story Starters - BlackSheep Press

- Multiple Choice Comprehension — lower- Prim-Ed
- Cloze Encounters - Lower - Prim-Ed
- Contemporary Cloze — Lower - Prim-Ed
- • Cloze 10-12 yrs - Prim-Ed
- Rainbow Readers -interactive pack
- SRA Reading Laboratory – 1 and 1c
Sails - reading packs

Banana reading series

Wolfhill reading series

- Usborne young readers
- Folens/Fallons reading series
- Streets Ahead reading series
- Dolche List/Frys List
- Online Resources – TTRS Typings, Spellings for me, Alpaca, Teach your Monster to read
- Reading comprehension 1,2,3 LDA
- High interest non-fiction level 3-4 Connectors
- Reading comprehension 'tales to make you smile' - Prim-Ed
- Reading Roundabout 2 -EasyLearn
- Smart Kids Lets Spell Series
- Between the Lines — 3,4 (streets ahead)
- Write creatively book I - Prim-Ed
- Early learning centre - flash cards
- Sounds OK Book 1,2,3 folens (phonics and spelling)
- Work shark 3
- Word attack C
- C V C/ CC VC magnet spelling game

Maths Resources:

- Fraction tables x 2

- Text books (Busy at Maths, Planet Maths, Maths my Way, Super Sleuth)
- Abacus x 5
- Manual clock x 16
- Maths Resources – Measures, Games, 2d & 3d Shapes (all stored in Maths boxes in corridor outside 3rd/4th Class storage units)
- Mad4Maths 4,5,6
- Tables cards 1-12 addition, subtraction, multiplication and division
- Number shark
- Sum Time - maths workbook I
- Tables books
- Online Maths Games – Mathletics, Topmarks, Folen's Maths games,
- Maths Mate 1 -6
- Mental Maths 1-6
- Plus 1 Programme, Power of 1, Power of 2, Perform with Time (1,2,3 Learning)
- Maths Zone 1-6