

**GAIRMSCOIL MHUIRE**

**SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY**

**ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT  
11/10/2011**

**APPROVED BY CO. GALWAY VEC  
16/12/2011**

**THIS POLICY HAS BEEN PREPARED IN CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS, STUDENTS, STAFF,  
THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AND COUNTY GALWAY VEC**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **BACKGROUND**

Our school's mission statement extolled the values of hope, justice, compassion and care. This Special Needs Policy is written in that same spirit, where the uniqueness of the individual is recognised and a partnership of learning is created.

### **INCLUSION**

Gairmscoil Mhuire welcomes pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN) and in line with the Education for Person's with Special Needs Act 2004 recognises "the need to provide that the education of people with such needs shall wherever possible take place in an inclusive environment". It will endeavour to ensure that these students are free to participate in school life in so far as is reasonably practicable. The school accepts that no student should be bullied or singled out for unfair treatment as a consequence of their disability. Proactive steps are taken to ensure that the school provides an inclusive environment that is non-judgemental and supportive.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS MISSION STATEMENT**

It is our hope that our school is a place where we promote and facilitate a whole school approach to special needs education and so create a community of learning.

In our policy and practice, we aim to nurture the values of hope, compassion and understanding in all of our students. We recognise each pupil as a unique individual with different talents and needs. We endeavour to meet their physical, intellectual and emotional needs through our student focused programmes.

In fostering an atmosphere of learning that is holistic in approach, we nurture each individual student's personal growth and development. We promote autonomous learning and strive to enable all to achieve their full potential.

We offer an inclusive curriculum, which is relevant, realistic and co-operative, and we do so in active partnership with pupils, parents and staff.

### **RATIONALE**

This policy document aims to outline the form that additional educational support for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) takes in the school and the philosophy, which underpins it. It is written in the context of the Education Act 1998, and takes account of the *Education for Person's with Disabilities Act (EPSEN)* published in 2004. This policy should be viewed as a working document and be reviewed on an annual basis.

This policy bases its rationale on the principles laid out in the EPSEN Act which state that:

*"The education of people with SEN shall take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs",*

*"People with SEN shall have the same right to avail of and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers", and*

*“That people with SEN leave school with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives.”*

**(EPSEN Act 2004)** We see this policy as a reflection of our current practice.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION NEED’S TEAM AND CATEGORIES**

### **CATEGORIES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN)**

To date, the school has provided for the following categories of students with Special Educational Needs:

- Learning Support Students
- Borderline/ Mild General Learning Disability
- Emotional / Behavioural Difficulties—ADD/ADHD
- Autism / Autistic Spectrum Disorder (e.g.. Aspergers Syndrome)
- Specific Learning Difficulty—Dyslexia
- Physical disabilities—Dyspraxia
- Mild Speech and Language Disorders
- Sensory Difficulties (hearing & visual impairments)
- ESOL students (English for students of other languages)

In addition to these categories we understand that under *circular 08/02 (Appendix 3)* the following categories of SEN exist also:

- Moderate General Learning Disability
- Severe / Profound General Learning Disability

## **ROLES WITHIN RESOURCE/LEARNING SUPPORT DEPARTMENT**

### **Resource Teacher**

The Role of the Resource teacher is to provide support for children with special educational needs as listed above. The Resource teacher has responsibility for assessing and recording students’ needs and progress, setting specific targets, team-teaching and assisting teachers in adopting the curriculum. The Resource teacher also has a responsibility for meeting and advising parents and meeting with relevant professionals.

**(Circular 08/02)**

### **Learning Support Teacher**

The role of the Learning Support teacher is to support and remediate the literacy and numeracy needs of students. The Learning Support teacher has responsibility for diagnostic assessment, programme planning, consultation with parents, teachers and pupils, communication with whole staff and for teaching, monitoring and evaluating students’ progress.

**(Learning Support Guidelines 2000)**

## **ROLE OF PARTNERS IN THE SEN TEAM**

### **Parents**

Parents, through their unique knowledge of their own child have much to contribute to their child's learning programme. Parents are encouraged to actively communicate with the school if they observe any learning or related difficulties in their child at home. In all cases where screening, assessment and profiling is being conducted parents are consulted and their permission sought.

The SEN department advocates a partnership of collaboration and co-operation with parents of students with SEN.

### **Students**

The involvement of pupils in the development, implementation and review of their own learning programmes is an important principle that underpins effective SEN provision. Students are encouraged to contribute the learning targets as set out in the Individual Learning Plan (ILP), and to develop ownership of the skills and strategies that are taught in the Resource rooms.

### **Classroom teacher**

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class. It is particularly important that all class teachers create a classroom environment that accommodates and takes cognisance of learning difficulties. The class teacher also plays an important role in the early identification of pupils with SEN. The class teacher is alert to the possibility of general and specific learning difficulties and brings their concerns to the attention of the SEN department. A key element of successful SEN provision is a high level of consultation and co-operation between the class teacher and the SEN teaching team. The class teacher is welcome to contribute to the learning targets set out in the SEN student's ILP.

### **Specialist teacher with Resource hours**

The role of the subject teacher, who has Resource hours in the SEN department, is to support and contribute to the individual learning needs of SEN students. Teachers with resource hours on their timetable are asked to attend an initial meeting with the SEN department. At this meeting the needs of the student and his/her learning targets are outlined. The "specialist" is asked to contribute to those targets and indeed formulate programmes of their own which provide curricular support to the SEN student.

The SEN department works in close collaboration and consultation with those specialist teachers who contribute so effectively and creatively to the SEN department.

### **Guidance Counsellors**

The Guidance Counsellors role within the SEN team consists largely of the following functions:

- Counselling in personal, educational and career development
- Personal and social development
- Psychological testing
- Career information management

- Vocational preparation – job search skills, preparation for work experience
- Referrals to other professionals and agencies
- Evaluation of the guidance and counselling needs and services

### **Board of Management (BOM)**

The Board of Management has an important role in developing, supporting and monitoring school policy on Special Education Needs provision. The BOM oversee the development, implementation and review of school policy on SEN, ensure adequate accommodation and teaching resources and provides a secure facility for the storage of records in respect of SEN students.

### **SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANT**

As laid out in *circulars 07/02, 24/03* the role of the Special Needs Assistant is as follows:

#### **Role of the SNA in support of the student**

Responsibility for the care and well being of the student in a manner that values respects and supports the student as well as promotes independence.

Assist	Model	Focus student
Listen	Clarify	Read material
Encourage	Anticipate	Make note of HW
Support	Observe	

#### **Role of the SNA in collaboration with the teacher**

Assist	Prepare materials
Communicate	Feedback observations
Free up in the class	Maintaining work areas
Support	Organising folders

In addition to the duties laid as above we also stress the following points:

- The SNA may not be asked to act as substitute from an absent teacher or be left in sole charge of a class.
- The SNA is privy to confidential information pertaining to SEN pupils. As such confidentiality is of paramount importance.
- The role of the SNA is pivotal and important in the school. We recognise the enormous contribution our SNA's make to the school.

*Please refer to Circular 08/02*

## **MODEL OF ORGANISATION**

### **WHOLE SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Gairmscoil Mhuire organises its classes in a mixed ability setting. Each first year group is formed with a deliberate mix of all ability ranges. Classes are taught as a homogenous unit for each subject, from first to third year. The school does however bear in mind that some subjects do not lend themselves to being taught as mixed ability and may have different requirements depending on the syllabus being taught. This can result in some classes within a small number of subject areas being banded.

### **ANCHOR SYSTEM**

An anchor system is currently being developed within the school. Once established each year group will have a Learning Support or Resource teacher acting as *anchor*. The anchor will have overall responsibility for co-ordinating and allocating resources to SEN students in that particular year group. The anchor will also be a point of contact for parents, year head and students.

This anchor system ensures a tight knit referral system and allows for comprehensive tracking of all students. Each anchor will meet with their respective Year Head once a week.

### **IDENTIFICATION OF SEN**

An important role of the SEN department is to establish the procedures necessary for the preliminary screening of pupils by the class teacher and subsequent selection of pupils for more detailed diagnostic assessment. Central to this process is the class teacher and the parent.

#### **School based identification**

A class teacher, tutor and/or Year Head can refer any student they are concerned about to the SEN department. Referral forms are freely available to all staff on the resource notice board in the staffroom.

Any referral made by a class teacher or tutor must be forwarded to the Year Head who will begin a broader profile. This information when complete is passed on to the relevant SEN anchor.

This first step in the screening process allows the SEN team, in co-operation with Guidance / Counsellors and Year Heads, to identify the nature of SEN being experienced. It is during this time that the learning, emotional, behavioural and social needs of the students are established.

*Please see referral sheets enclosed in Appendix 1.*

#### **Parent Referral Process**

When a parent notifies the Principal that a student is not benefiting from the regular education programme provided by the school the Principal, with the parents' approval, initiates the administration of the preliminary screening process (as outlined above).

Once the Principal forms the view that the student may have SEN, the Principal will advise the parent in relation to appropriate assessment. The Education for Person's with Special Education Needs Act (2004) states that where an assessment establishes

that a student has SEN, the Principal must cause an educational plan to be prepared for the student within one month from the receipt by him/her of the assessment. An IEP is a process of consultation and collaboration. It identifies a student's current strengths and needs. It sets long and short-term goals, identifies the resources needed and available, sets time limits and evaluates progress at regular intervals. It should also contain an outline of his/her Individual Learning Programme (ILP).

### **Preliminary Screening**

If it is deemed appropriate the Principal initiates a process of formal and informal assessment to be conducted by the SEN department.

Informal Assessment:

- Observations from mainstream teachers
- Consultation with parents
- Student Journal
- Meeting with pupil

Formal Assessment:

- Review of entrance tests
- Review of in house exams and reports
- Behavioural record if appropriate
- Consultation with Guidance Counsellors

Following this profiling stage decisions are made as to appropriate support warranted

- No need for further action
- Needs for monitoring/support in mainstream setting
- Purposeful Withdrawal

All information / data gathered is recorded in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) which is kept in their file.

### **MODEL 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:

- Team Teaching
- Support Teaching
- Inclusion of SNA in specific classes
- Small group withdrawal
- Individual withdrawal
- Curricular reduction

The period of intervention recommended to each student is dependent on the nature and extent of their individual need. The duration of provision is reviewed at the end of every half term. 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 parents/guardians, class teachers and student.

## **PROGRAMME PLANNING**

The objectives of the diagnostic assessments conducted by the Resource / Learning Support teacher are to identify the pupil's learning, behavioural, emotional and social needs. The information generated by this assessment process is essential for the completion of the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) and subsequently their Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

### **Individualised Education Plan (IEP)**

Our IEP includes:

- Personal/Background details
- Educational details (primary school details / assessment and learning support details)
- Nature & Degree of Special Educational Needs
- How Those Needs Affect Educational Development
- Formal test results
- General profile based on formal/informal assessment eg
  - Literacy and numeracy skills
  - Social and Communication skills
  - Ability to keep class rules
- Abilities Skills and Interests
- Learning Needs
- Priority Learning Needs
- Exam supports needed
- Support services involved
- Relevant documentation is also attached to the Plan

*Please see IEP template enclosed in Appendix 2*

### **Individual Learning Programme (ILP)**

Following the establishment of the IEP / Pupil Profile, the SEN teachers draw up a practical programme of work. This programme of work sets out the short-term targets needed to meet the students learning needs as detailed in the IEP. Class teachers and SNA have input into these programmes. It is our hope that parents become part of the ILP process also.

A ILP is written for every student in Resource/Learning Support every term and a copy is available in each individual student's file.

Each scheme of work includes:

- Targets
- Strategies/Resources used
- Progress/Outcomes

The IEP forms part of the ILP

*See Individual Learning Plan template in Appendix 2.*

## **REVIEW/EVALUATION**

The progress of each pupil should be monitored on an ongoing basis throughout the instructional term.

Attached to each ILP is a pupil/teacher evaluation sheet. At the end of the term, both teacher and pupil evaluate the merits, progress and weaknesses of the programme.

Pupil evaluations may help to form the basis of future planning. It is hoped that this review process in the future will include the perspectives of class teachers and parents also.

The primary purpose of this review is to determine whether or not the agreed learning targets have been achieved and to decide the level of Resource support, if any that should be provided in the following instructional term.

## **TIMETABLING OF RESOURCE PROVISION**

### **Irish Exemptions**

All students who have an Irish exemption at Junior Cycle are timetabled for Study or Resource at this time depending on the nature of the exemption. At Senior Cycle resource support lessons are reviewed on an annual basis.

*Irish exemption criteria and procedure Appendix 9.*

### **Modern Language Waivers (Junior Cycle)**

At Junior Cycle all modern languages are facilitated on the timetable at the same time. In addition, at this time for students who are exempt from or who wish not to study a modern language, there is an opportunity to attend resource at this time or attend study.

### **Withdrawals**

The SEN department may withdraw students from other subject areas in consultation with the respective subject department and with parents' permission. In some cases students with SEN may be on reduced timetables to facilitate their Special Education Needs.

### **Transition Year**

At present there is no facility available on the T.Y. timetable to meet the needs of students with SEN. This is reviewed on an annual basis and subject teachers aim to support students within the class setting.

### **Senior Cycle**

As stated earlier at Senior Cycle Resource support decreases but is still available according to resources allocated.

### **The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)**

The LCA is recommended for students whose learning needs would not be met by the demands of the traditional Leaving Certificate. In instances where an SEN student chooses LCA it is generally accepted that the curriculum itself supports the student

and thus specific SEN provision is unnecessary. However where it is apparent that additional support is necessary for an SEN student, this will be reviewed on an individual basis.

## **COMMUNICATION**

### **SEN TEAM**

- SEN team teachers and SNA's meet each week. All members of the team draw up an agenda
- Principal and/or Deputy Principal meet with SEN dept. every month
- Anchor SEN teacher meets Year Head every week

### **SEN PUPILS REGISTER**

At the beginning of the new school year, every teacher receives a detailed register of all pupils with SEN. This register includes:

- Name of pupil
- Category of difficulty
- Support being provided
- Potential areas of difficulty
- Potential provision at State Exams

Parents are informed that this register is given to all teachers and their permission sought in advance.

### **SEN INFORMATION BOARD**

In the staff room teachers have full access to referral forms.

Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations (R.A.C.E.) arrangements are posted on this board.

Courses and articles of interest are also posted here and attention is drawn to specific items of interest in weekly staff bulletin.

### **SEN STUDENTS WHO PRESENT MID-YEAR**

- If a psychological assessment is available, with parents' permission, a summary of needs and recommendations is forwarded to all relevant staff
- In the case of students without a psychological assessment, whose profile warrants inclusion in Resource/Learning Support caseload, teachers are notified of need and support

### **RECORD KEEPING**

- A minutes folder is kept recording all meetings by or involving SEN team / personnel
- The SEN department maintains an up to date record of all student referrals
- All relevant documentation including every communication with parent, teacher or other is recorded in this file

## **INDUCTION OF NEW STAFF**

As part of the mentoring programme facilitated by the school, new staff is addressed by the resource department and advised formally of current practices in relation to SEN in school.

## **ENROLMENT PROCESS**

### **ADMISSIONS POLICY EXTRACT FOR SEN**

#### **STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

It is the policy of the school to try and identify at an early stage of the enrolment process the specific needs of each student. Parents/guardians will be required to provide all relevant reports and assessments on students with special educational needs. This information is required to

1. Ensure the most appropriate education can be planned and provided for students with special educational needs.
2. To access the appropriate supports and resources from the Department of Education and Science and other support agencies

Enrolment of a student is not contingent upon securing such resources; however it may be necessary to defer the admission/commencement of the educational programme for the student in the school until such resources as deemed necessary by the Special Education department in the school or as outlined in any reports by relevant professionals are provided by the Department of Education and Science or other appropriate agencies.

#### **TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL PROGRAMME**

Our transition programme for incoming first years hopes to foster a climate of support that is flexible and allows for creative responses to individual needs. Our transition programme is hopefully the first step on the road to inclusion in Gairmscoil Mhuire. We seek, in this transition period, to treat the admission of all students to the school with sensitivity and a realistic but positive outlook.

#### **Sharing of relevant information**

In making provision for students with SEN it is advisable that schools and parents share the following information.

Has the student access to any of the following resources?

- Special Needs Assistant
- Special class setting
- Support or help from either the learning support or resource teacher
- Assistance with behavioural difficulties
- Psychological Assessment
- Occupational Therapy assessment
- Referral to Health Board for any reason
- Support in relation to a sensory impairment
- Support in relation to travel or mobility
- Current IEP
- Specific ICT support

### **Steps in moving to Gairmscoil Mhuire**

Our transition from Primary to Secondary School programme includes:

- At Open Night parents are encouraged to meet with SEN team.
- Where specific concerns re: SEN students is in evidence, phone contact made by resource dept. with parents and needs/options/resources available discussed.
- Liaison with school who run entrance exams in May of each year.
- Results of entrance exams collated and reviewed by SEN dept., Guidance Counselling Dept. and Principal.
- Letters sent to each feeder primary school inviting respective Resource/Learning Support personnel to forward any information to school. SEN personnel and HSCL also contact/visit primary schools to collate information, transfer relevant documentation and note the advice / recommendations from primary school.
- Class groups formed in consultation with Year Head. Prioritise one or two classes for additional resources if warranted.

### **ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE**

Our entrance exams are:

- Maths , English and Irish

The purpose of the entrance exams is to identify learning needs that have not yet come to light, to ensure a true mixed ability class setting and to facilitate option choice where appropriate.

Further testing includes:

- AH2/AH3
- GRT2 Nfer Nelson (Context Comprehension)
- Neale Analysis
- Bangor Dyslexia Screening Test
- Dyslexia Screening Test
- NRIT
- 

As policy we do not disclose entrance test results to parents. However, where a concern arises, parents are contacted and student's individual needs are discussed. All screening occurs with parents' permission.

### **ONGOING MONITORING OF PROGRESS AND SUPPORT OF TRANSFER FROM SECOND LEVEL**

As stated earlier the progress of each student is monitored on an on-going basis throughout the term. At the end of each term a detailed review is conducted to observe, record and evaluate progress made. Parents and pupils are to be involved in this process. At the end of each year it is envisaged that certification for achievements made throughout the year be awarded to students and a portfolio of work be presented.

In accordance with EPSEN Act 2004 the school has a responsibility to prepare and carry out a review of an education plan in respect of the SEN student who within the following months will reach the age of 18 years. This education plan sets out the extent, if any, to which the goals set out in the IEP and ILP successfully met the Special Education Needs of the student.

The plan should also outline the reasons for any failure to meet those goals and the effect any such failure has had on the development of the child. It is hoped to begin this process in the next year.

### **LIAISON WITH OTHER PROFESSIONAL**

It is often the role of the Resource / Learning Support teacher to attend meetings with and liaise closely with a number of out-of-school agencies such as those listed below.

#### **NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION (NCSE)**

The National Council for Special Education has been established as an independent statutory body. The council has authority to:

- Carry out research and provide expert advice to the Minister for Education and Science on the educational needs of children with disabilities and the provision of related services.
- Provide for a range of services at local and national level in order that the educational needs of children with disabilities are identified and provided for, and
- Co-ordinate, with health authorities, schools and other relevant bodies, the provision of education and related support services to children with disabilities.

*See Circular PPT 01/05 for detailed outline of role of NCSE*

#### **SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS ORGANISER (SENO)**

The SENO represents the local delivery aspect of the work of the NCSE. Our Seno is Celia Donoghue. SENO's have responsibility for:

- Co-ordinating and facilitating the delivery of educational services to children with SEN.
- Focal point of contact for parents / guardians and schools
- Process applications for resources for children with SEN.
- Regular and detailed engagement with organisations such as health authorities, the DES, the Inspectorate and National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

#### **NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE (NEPS)**

Gairmscoil Mhuire is provided with a senior psychologist from NEPS. The service that is delivered to us by NEPS operates under the following framework:

- Consultation about individual students
- Recommendations and advice on individual students needs
- Advice on classroom strategies and resources
- Advisory work in relation to SEN policy and practice
- Consultation and recommendations in relation to R.A.C.E. (Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations)
- Full psychological assessments available to 2 students per year.

Please note that our access to a senior psychologist precludes us from accessing DES funding for unlimited psychological assessments, as is the case in many other schools.

A waiting list does not exist in relation to the 2 assessments available. Student's cases are presented to the NEPS psychologist and each case prioritised for assessment on its merits by the psychologist.

**OTHER AGENCIES**

- Health Service Executive
- Foroige
- Athenry Adolescent Support Project
- Jigsaw
- Youthreach
- St Anne's. Galway
- NEWB
- Dyslexia Association of Ireland (DAI)
- Irish Learning Support Association (ILSA)
- Irish Association for Teachers in Special Education (IATSE)

**REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF THIS POLICY**

The implementation, monitoring and review of this policy will be done by senior management in conjunction with the staff, parents and the board of management on an ongoing basis. It is envisaged that the policy would be reviewed on a formal basis two years after the date of adoption by the board of management.

**Date adopted by the Board of Management 11/10/2011**

**Signed**

**Chairperson Board of Management:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Individual Education Plan Personal/Background Details

Personal/Background Details					
<b>Name of Student:</b>		<b>Class:</b>		<b>DOB:</b>	
<b>Name of School:</b>		<b>Principal:</b>		<b>Year Head:</b>	
<b>Class Tutor:</b>		<b>SNA:</b>		<b>SENO:</b>	
<b>Name of Parents/s, Guardian/s:</b>					
<b>Date:</b>					
<b>Previous Support eg National School, outside agencies etc</b>					

### Nature & Degree of Special Educational Needs & How Those Needs Affect Educational Development

Nature & Degree of Special Educational Needs & How Those Needs Affect Educational Development	
<b>SEN</b>	
<b>Impact /Affects</b>	

### Present Level of Educational Performance: Student Profile

Formal Assessment Outside Agency			
Date	Name of Test	Administered by	Outcome

Formal Assessment School Based			
Date	Name of Test	Administered by	Outcome

Informal Assessments – Observations from Student, Parents, Teachers & SNA	
<b>Social</b>	

Communication Skills	
Self-management skills	
Ability to Keep to Class Rules and Routines	
Literacy Skills	
Mathematical Skills	
Access to Curriculum	
Learning style and Interests	
Additional Information about Education & Care	
Attendance	

<b>Abilities, Skills, Talents</b>	
<b>Learning Needs</b>	
<b>Priority Learning Needs</b>	
<b>Exam, Subjects, Levels &amp; Special Accommodations</b>	
<b>Support Services</b>	

## Individual Learning Programme

Targets	Strategies/Materials	Who	Date	Progress/Outcomes Key: → = Emerging

Signed Staff:  
Parent:  
Student:  
Proposed Review:

Date:  
Date:  
Date:  
Date: