



St. Angela's School Ursuline Convent Waterford

Special Educational Needs

Policy

School Mission Statement

St Angela's is a girls Catholic school which aims to cherish the uniqueness of each individual and to develop the full potential of all members of the school community.

Introduction and Background

St. Angela's School is a post-primary girls' school that operates under the trusteeship of Le Chéile Schools Trust. The spirit of St Angela is rooted in the central mission of Ursuline education. The school's mission statement stresses the dignity and uniqueness of each person, the importance of courtesy and kindness, and the fostering of courage and confidence. Within this mission the school community envisions the shared role of teachers, staff, students, parents and management in educating active citizens for society within an inclusive school community.

Inclusion

St. Angela's School welcomes pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN) and, in line with the Education for Persons 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." We 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 her disability. Proactive steps are taken to ensure that the school provides an inclusive environment that is non-judgemental and supportive. Refer, too, to the School's Enrolment Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and Pastoral Care Policy.

SEN Mission Statement

In line with the overall school mission statement, it is our aim to promote and facilitate a whole-school approach to SEN by recognising and respecting each pupil as a unique individual.

Rationale

This policy aims to outline the commitment which this school has in creating a learning environment that is inclusive and supportive of all pupils in line with our mission statement and within the principles of relevant legislation. We see this policy as a reflection of our current practice.

Aims

The aims of the SEN policy are:

1. Promote the emotional, social, educational and physical well-being of students by developing self-esteem, self-confidence, a sense of personal responsibility and the ability to live and work with others;
2. Ensure that all relationships within the school are imbued with a spirit of care and mutual respect;

3. Ensure that education takes place in an inclusive environment;
4. Strive to ensure that when students with SEN leave our school, they take with them the life skills they need to participate in society and to live independent and fulfilled lives;
5. Involve parents/guardians in decisions about the education of their children.

SEN Team & Categories

Categories of SEN

To date, the following categories of Special Education Needs have been provided for:

- Borderline/Mild General Learning Disabilities
- Moderate General Learning Disabilities – Down Syndrome
- Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties – ADD/ADHD
- Specific Learning Difficulties – Dyslexia
- Physical Disabilities – Dyspraxia, Cerebral Palsy
- Mild Speech and Language Disorders
- Sensory Difficulties (Hearing and Visual impairments)
- Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders – Asperger's Syndrome

Roles and Responsibilities SEN Team

SEN Co-Ordinator

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy, liaising with external agencies, answering requests for advice from teachers, the co-ordination of provision, including liaising with all teachers involved, maintaining SEN register for all pupils with special needs, establishing and contributing to CPD training in SEN.

Role of the Subject Teacher

The subject teacher is the leader of learning within his or her classroom and has full responsibility for all the students in his or her class, including students with special education needs. The Individual Learning Plan is a teaching plan that supports a differentiated curriculum.

Role of the Resource Teacher (from Circular SP.ED 08/02)

The post of Resource Teacher is an additional post allocated to assist a school in providing an education which meets the needs of children assessed as having disabilities. Under the direction of the relevant Principal, the role of the Resource Teacher is to provide additional teaching support for these children who have been fully integrated into mainstream schools and who need such support. In addition, s/he should advise and liaise with other teachers, parents and relevant professionals in the children's interest.

This is a whole school effort and not the responsibility of the resource teacher alone because these children are fully integrated into a mainstream school and will spend most of his/her time with the mainstream teacher.

A Resource Teacher assists schools in providing support for children with special educational needs arising from disability by:

- (a) Assessing and recording child needs and progress;
- (b) Setting specific, time-related targets for each child and agreeing these with the class teacher and principal;
- (c) Direct teaching of the children, either in a separate room or within the mainstream class;
- (d) Team-teaching - so long as the children concerned are deriving benefit from it;
- (e) Advising class teachers in regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, suitable textbooks, use of Information Technology and suitable software and a range of other related matters;
- (f) Meeting and advising parents, when necessary, accompanied by the class teacher, as necessary;
- (g) Short meetings with other relevant professionals, in the children's interest - e.g. psychologists, speech and language therapists, visiting teachers, special school or special class teachers.

The Principal

The Principal has the overall responsibility for the development and implementation of inclusive school policies and procedures in relation to the education of students with SEN. The Principal is available to liaise with the Learning Support Teacher, the Resource Teacher and the parents of students with SEN when necessary. The Principal may delegate specific functions to other members of the staff.

Deputy Principal

The role of the Deputy Principal is to work with the Principal in establishing and promoting whole-school policies and procedures that are supportive of the learning of all students, including those with SEN. In particular, this may involve the principal delegating authority and responsibility to the Deputy Principal to work and liaise with other members of staff, parents and various agencies (including the National Council for Special Education) to put in place structures and plans to meet the particular needs of students with SEN so as to enable each student to reach her potential.

Mainstream Teachers

Within the framework of a whole-school approach to inclusion, mainstream teachers have the primary responsibility for teaching all students, including students with SEN, within their class groups. The mainstream teacher may become aware of the possibility of general and or specific learning difficulties and will bring this to the attention of the SEN department through the SEN Referral process. Consultation occurs between the mainstream teacher and the SEN teaching team in setting individual student targets and in outlining and recording student progress. The mainstream teacher contributes to the learning targets set out in the SEN student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Mainstream Teacher with Resource Hours

The role of the mainstream teacher with resource hours is to support and contribute to the individual learning needs of the SEN student. Teachers with resources hours liaise with the student's parents/guardians, Learning Support Teacher, the Resource Teacher and other relevant members of the SEN team as well as with the individual student to assess and formulate individual programmes which provide curricular and other necessary support to the SEN student.

Year Heads and Class Tutors

Each class tutor and year head has a responsibility to his or her own class group /year group. The class tutor is responsible for addressing individual student issues within the class group. The class tutor may refer issues and

incident to the year head who has a wider responsibility. The class tutor/ year head take responsibility for early signs of discipline issues within their class group as well as with other issues that may arise. They are the primary point of contact with parents. The class tutor/year head may refer to or collaborate with the Deputy Principal and the Principal thereafter.

The Guidance Counsellor

The core responsibility of the guidance counsellor is to provide learning experiences that assist students to develop self-management skills that will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. The guidance counsellor's role within the SEN team consists largely of the following functions:

- Counselling in personal, educational and career development
- Personal and social development
- Career information management
- Consultation with parents and staff
- Consultation with community organisations
- Vocational preparation – job search skills, preparation for work experience
- Referrals to other professionals and agencies
- Evaluation of the guidance and counselling needs and services
- Assessment
- The input that the guidance counsellor has with a student with SEN varies from student to student, depending on personnel circumstances and need.

The Chaplain

The Chaplain is available for guidance and support by appointment during the school day.

Students with SEN

Where involvement is appropriate, the student may:

- Be involved in the IEP meeting
- Provide information about his/her own learning, talents, abilities, skills, interests, wishes and concerns.
- Assist in the identification of priority learning needs, targets and strategies
- Give feedback that will contribute to the monitoring and recording of progress (e.g., Learning Log).

Special Needs Assistants (SNA)

The SNA has responsibility for the care needs and wellbeing of the student in a manner that values, respects and supports the student as well as promotes independence. The SNA has direct involvement with the student with SEN in that the SNA is there to assist, communicate, encourage and support the student and also to help the student with her organisational skills. The SNA plays a role in keeping the student with SEN focused during class as well as observing the student during the school day.

The SNA also has an essential and valued role in collaboration with the Resource Teacher and/or the Learning Support Teacher. The SNA provides information on the student with SEN day to day progress during after school meetings with the Resource Teacher and/or the Learning Support Teacher. The SNA is also available to assist and free up class time for the Resource teacher and within mainstream classes the mainstream teacher as the SNA provides the extra support needed by the student with SEN in a manner of note taking, keeping the student focused and the noting of homework where necessary.

Roles and Responsibilities of External SEN Team

The Board of Management

The Board of Management has the responsibility for overseeing the development, implementation and review of school policies and services in relation to the inclusion of students with SEN.

External Agencies

In some cases external agencies, e. g. NEPS, CRC, Visiting Teachers, may be involved in the assessment and support of a student with SEN and may contribute to the development of an Individual Education Plan. Apart from expert advice and support to school staff, the agency is often consulted about individual students. The agency may gather information about a student, her skills and abilities, and may plan a programme of support. This information and support is communicated by means of phone calls, texts, emails, receipt of reports and meetings.

The NCSE Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO)

The NCSE SENO may refer a student to the Resource class and thereafter may be involved in transferring information regarding the student with SEN from the primary school or second-level school in the case of a transfer between second level schools.

SENOs are appointed by the NCSE to provide a direct local service to the parents of children with special educational needs and to schools within geographical areas.

This involves identifying the needs of children and deciding on the level of resources schools require to provide them with an appropriate education service.

A SENO deals with applications for additional teaching and Special Needs Assistant support for children with special educational needs from all schools. The SENO also assists with applications for transport and Assistive Technology. A SENO can advise schools and parents on the facilities, services, and resources available to assist children with Special Educational Needs.

Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians, 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 difficulties 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, by means of written permission. Parents of students who have been awarded Resource Teaching Support are encouraged to contact the Resource Teacher as well as the Subject Teacher by means of phone calls, text, email or by having a meeting as issues arise. Communication is encouraged at all times. Parents of students with SEN enrolled in mainstream classes are encouraged to contact the class tutor or Learning Support Teacher if they have queries or concerns. Parent-Teacher meetings occur yearly and provide an additional opportunity for parents to speak to all teachers involved in their child's education.

SEN Model of Organisation

Identification Process

Students with SEN are identified in the following manner:

New Students

The transfer of information in the transition from primary to second level and from second level to second level is very important. The enrolment form requires information pertaining to identifying students with SEN. Each year an open day is held to assist parents and the school with the process of sharing information about

prospective students. Parents are requested to inform the school of any special educational, medical or other need. This information is provided by means of the school enrolment form.

Students with SEN may be identified following consultation with the feeder primary schools. Regular communication exists between the management of St. Angela's School and the feeder primary schools within the area.

Pupils in need of extra support are identified using the standardised tests including Drucondra, Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT), Wide Range Achievement Test 4 (WRAT4), Dyslexia Screening Test (DST).

Parents of students with SEN can also make contact with the school. Once contact is made, the Resource Teacher/ Learning Support Teacher is available to the parent for further contact and information.

SENO Referral (Refer to attached SEN referral form)

Existing students

If parents/guardians have concerns, they may contact the school secretary who will direct them to the appropriate department.

Classroom teachers, tutors and year heads may become concerned and highlight the need for a student to be considered for learning support in the event of noticeable difficulties arising in class. This concern is brought to the attention of SENCO through the SEN Referral process. The SENCO informs school management. Subsequently, the SENCO may carry out assessment, if necessary, with permission of parents/guardians, and may apply for additional resource hours.

If a student has not been identified as having a special educational need until after enrolment, the permission of parents/guardian is sought to have the student assessed by the appropriate professionals (NEPS Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist, etc.). The student may receive learning support until such an assessment is carried out; this is allocated on a basis of need and resources available.

SEN Classroom

SEN students are identified in the following manner for enrolment in Learning Support/Resource Classroom:

- Referral from Primary School with appropriate assessment.
- Parental referral and concern by means of the school enrolment form and/or a meeting with the relevant personnel within the school.
- Subject teacher referral.
- SENCO referral to the school.
- Subject choice to alleviate large number of subjects

Models of SEN Support

Resource and Learning Support in the Junior Cycle

Currently being drafted

Resource and Learning Support in Transition Year

In line with the overall school mission statement, it is our aim to promote and facilitate a whole-school approach to SEN by recognising and respecting each pupil as a unique individual. Students with special educational needs are included in all aspects of our Transition Year programme and encouraged to participate in all classes, modules, workshops and extracurricular activities.

Resource and Learning Support in the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Programme

Currently being drafted

Resource and Learning Support in the Senior Cycle

Currently being drafted

Student-Centred Learning

- Support of Subject Teacher through differentiation.
- Team Teaching
- Resource Support Teaching: Low-Incidence Resource Teaching Support (students awarded individual resource hours by the NCSE),
- Learning Support (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Years): High-Incidence Teaching Support (students who access Learning Support through the General Allocation Mode),
- Inclusion of SNA in specific classes
- Small group withdrawal
- Individual withdrawal
- Curricular reduction
- Cross-Age Peer Tutoring (Learners' Centre)

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

According to "The Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs Post-Primary Guidelines" (2007): "The individual education plan (IEP) is an effective process through which a student's special educational needs can be addressed and by which an appropriate education can be provided for him/her."

The IEP process involves:

- Gathering Information: Personal/ Background details
- Educational details (primary school details/assessment and learning support details)
- Categorisation of need (assessment reports/ information attained from parents)
- General profile based on formal/informal assessment.
- SEN provision
- Priority Learning Needs
- Identifying the student's strengths and abilities
- Setting targets for each priority learning need
- Identifying the strategies and resources required
- Relevant documentation
- Setting the date for review: A review occurs each academic year. However it may occur more often dependent on student progress and circumstances.

"The Inclusion of Students with SEN Post-Primary Guidelines" [2007] Refer to pages 96-100.

An IEP is put in place for each student who has been awarded NCSE Resource Teaching Support Hours. The following stakeholders contribute to formation of the student's IEP:

Student with SEN

Parent/Guardian

Class Tutor

Subject Teachers

Resource Teacher

Learning Support Teacher

SNA

Relevant agencies, as previously mentioned

Collaboration for Success: Individual Education Plans

The classroom teacher

- The teacher is the leader of learning within his or her classroom and has full responsibility for all the students in his or her class, including students with special education needs
- The IEP's primary purpose is a teaching and learning plan.

The student

- The student with special education needs is an active, capable learner.
- The special education needs of many students can be met by class and school- wide strategies. Not all students with special education needs require an IEP, and few need one that captures every aspect of their learning.
- Some students with special education needs require particular teaching and learning strategies i.e. differentiations to the school and classroom curriculum instruction or adaptations. The IEP should only outline those differences.
- Student engagement, learning and achievement depend on the relationship between the teacher and the student.
- Student voice (or supported voice) will shape the IEP so the sense of the person is not through prescriptive goals. Students can monitor their own learning through their IEP goals.
- Schools' and teachers' attitudes and willingness to 'stand in the shoes' of the student with special education needs are critical to students' progress and achievement.
- IEPs are a way of adapting the school programme to fit the student rather than expecting the student to fit the school programme.

The IEP

- Targets are sometimes called behavioural, instructional or performance objectives. They should describe the knowledge, skills or understanding that a pupil is expected to have by the end of a particular time period.
- Targets should be SMART:
 - S – specific (behaviour, conditions, criteria)
 - M – manageable and measurable
 - A – achievable and agreed
 - R – realistic and reviewable

T – time bound

- Targets should include:

1. Behaviour: the observable action; what the pupil must do to demonstrate mastery of the task (e.g. “say the alphabet”)

2. Conditions: the conditions under which that behaviour is expected to occur (e.g. “given the oral direction, say the alphabet from memory”)

3. Criteria for Acceptable Performance: to what extent the pupil will be able to perform the action (e.g. “...in thirty seconds with 100% accuracy”)

- Also, the author(s) of IEP targets takes into account additional considerations: What would it be like to walk in the shoes of the student? Why would the student want to pursue a particular target? Does the work towards the target improve or enhance the student’s quality of life?
- Goals from the IEP must be embedded in everyday classroom practice so the IEP becomes a living, working document which is updated to reflect changing needs for that student within the classroom, school or community.
- The IEP team agrees the frequency of review of the IEP, but the plan must reflect current teaching and learning needs.
- IEP formats may be shaped by team agreement according to student’s needs. The final decision belongs to the parent and the classroom teacher.
- IEPs inform but do not replace the school’s obligations to report to parents.

Timetabling

Once teachers and students have been given their timetables for the forthcoming academic year, school management, liaising with the SENCO, allocate class periods of resource/learning support to both student and teacher.

Access to Curriculum

Some students with SEN are exempt from languages. If the student has been allocated resource hours, this time can be used to avail of these allocated hours. Students who are exempt from Irish may attend Book Club.

Access to Resources

Resources are accessed and allocated in the following way:

- SEN Library
- Sharing of school facilities
- Department budget available for purchase of equipment and computer programmes
- Timetabling of specialist rooms
- Regular discussions regarding resource allocation

Examinations and RACE

Applications are made for Reasonable Accommodations for Certificate Examinations (RACE) provision for students with SEN sitting a Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate Examination. The following are the range of accommodations available to the students which are applied for by the RACE Coordinator as per circular

criteria. RACE applications are submitted to The State Examinations Commission (SEC). The SEC determines whether or not accommodations are granted on an individual basis.

- Reader
- Scribe
- Reader and Scribe
- Tape Recorder
- Special Centre
- Spelling and grammar waiver in the language subjects
- Extra Time
- Use of Computer

Communication

SEN Team

Learning Support Teachers, Resource Teachers, the SENCO and SNAs communicate on an ongoing basis, sometimes formally and sometimes informally.

The SEN Team meet regularly.

Meetings with the School Psychologist, Occupational Therapists, Speech Therapists, Physiotherapist and SEN classroom teacher occur; these are arranged on a need basis by means of a phone call or email.

Meetings take place between class teachers and SEN classroom teacher. These can be informal or formal.

Teachers may organise meetings with the Learning Support Teacher regarding students enrolled in mainstream education.

Senior Management Meetings occur within the school on a regular basis and when issues regarding individual students with SEN arise.

Meetings with outside agencies, including SENO, NEPS, SESS, Visiting Teachers, etc.

In addition there are also staff meetings, in-service training days and staff development days.

SEN Pupil Register

At the beginning of the new school year all teachers and members of the SEN team receive a detailed register of all pupils with SEN. This register includes:

- Name of pupil
- Year/class group of pupil
- Category of difficulty
- Potential provision for State Exams

Liaising with parents

Communication with parents is achieved in the following manner:

- School Open Day
- Parent-teacher meetings. These occur on a yearly basis and are organised by school management
- Letter to the parents
- Student Journal
- Telephone calls
- Text messages
- Meetings with Multi-disciplinary team

- Meetings involving community agencies
- Meetings with Principal and SEN Co-ordinator
- IEP Process

Record Keeping

At present a full record of educational psychological reports are kept in the Deputy Principal's Office and in the locked Staff Room. Records of meetings and documents are kept on file in the locked Staff Room. Files of all students enrolled in the school are in a locked filing cabinet in the Prep Room and security-protected electronic files are kept in the school's VSWARE system.

Enrolment and Assessment

Admissions Policy

Our school welcomes students with SEN as per the school's admissions policy.

Transition from primary level to second level

Prior to the Open Night, parents are encouraged to meet with the SEN team to discuss any specific needs of their child, either currently identified at primary level or concerns they may have going forward to post-primary.

The Principal, and the SENCO make contact with and visit feeder schools enrolling new students. These visits help to both profile St. Angela's School and gather information about students requiring support. All relevant documentation is requested to be forwarded to the school, along with any advice and/or recommendations. This allows the school to put an appropriate plan in place to meet the needs of the incoming students from the start of the new school year.

Transition support programme

St. Angela's School has contact with all feeder schools within the community. Once an enrolment application has been made, parents/guardians and their daughter are invited to a private interview/information meeting. A member of the SEN Team conducts interviews of incoming students with SEN to gather additional information, to get to know the student and to pass on information about the school, its policies and expectations and to answer any questions.

In the spring of each year, 6th class students with SEN who are enrolled in the school are invited to attend an orientation programme that is organised and run by the Resource/Learning Support Teachers along with 1st Year Learning Support students. During the orientation, 1st year students make presentations to the incoming students and take their questions, the incoming students are shown around the school, and everyone enjoys some light refreshments while getting to know each other and making new friends.

During the transition programme, SEN students and SNAs are invited to tour the school and to meet with staff and students to help them begin to familiarise themselves with our large school.

Assessment

All students with SEN are expected to take the entrance exam. A modified exam may be offered, depending upon the student's level of ability. Our entrance exams are:

CAT 4 (Cognitive Ability Test)

Drumcondra Reasoning Test and Group Reading Test

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. As a policy, we do not disclose

assessment test results to parents unless requested to do so. However, where a concern arises, parents are contacted and a student's individual needs are discussed. All assessment occurs with parents' permission.

SEN Diagnostic Testing

Dyslexia Screening Test (DST)

Wide Range Achievement Test 4 (WRAT 4)

Transition Year

The Differential Aptitude Tests for Guidance (DATs) are taken by Transition Year students and are used as a supplementary tool in helping them make their subject choices for Senior Cycle. The SEN and Guidance Teams may also use the results as additional information if there is a concern that a student may have an undetected SEN.

Liaising with outside agencies and the community

It is often the role of the Resource Teacher or Learning Support teacher to attend meetings and liaise with a number of out-of-school agencies.

Further Areas for School Development Planning

1. Continue to limit the wider team to a smaller number of teachers, as per the recommendations published in the 27 March 2009 Whole-School Inspection Report: "In parallel with this planning process, school management should focus on the identification of a core team to deliver these supports and to limit the wider team to a smaller number of teachers. It should be possible within this structure to provide ongoing professional development for this group to build skills, capacity and expertise. This expertise should then be communicated to subject teachers generally to assist in the development of differentiated practice in classrooms to support the ongoing inclusion of these students in lessons."
2. Further profession training and development of staff in the area of SEN.
3. Making in school referral and IEP systems more formal with written referrals carried out in a step-by-step process: Who? Where? When? How?

Policy to be reviewed: Annually