



BLACKWATER COMMUNITY SCHOOL
LISMORE, CO. WATERFORD.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
WHOLE- SCHOOL INCLUSION POLICY

Blackwater Community School
08.03.2018

WHOLE SCHOOL POLICY ON SPECIAL NEEDS

Rationale:

This policy document aims to outline the form that additional educational support for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) takes in our school and the philosophy which underpins it. It is written in the context of The Education Act (1998) and takes cognisance of The Equal Status Act (2000), The Equality Act (2004), The Education Welfare Act (2000), The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003) and The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004). Three further publications have informed the content of this policy- “Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs- Post Primary Guidelines (Department of Education and Science) Inspectorate: 2007), “Exceptionally Able Students- Draft Guidelines for Teachers” (NCCA 2007) and The Special Education Teaching Allocation (Circular No. 0014/2017).

This policy is a revision of the existing draft policy and is a work in progress involving a consultative process involving staff, students, parents and Board of Management.

Blackwater Community School has an open and inclusive admissions policy and caters for all students from the catchment area, irrespective of ethnicity, cultural/religious background and special educational needs.

It is the policy of Blackwater Community School that all students with SEN will receive appropriate support to enable them to access effective learning opportunities suited to their needs and ability as set down in the Deed of Trust of Community Schools and the admissions policy. Parents are obliged to inform the school of the nature and detail of their child’s disability.

It is hoped that students with SEN will be able to access an educational setting where:

- all students are valued equally
- all students integrate socially and academically
- barriers to learning and participation are reduced
- there are systems and resources that ensure early identification and intervention
- suitable learning challenges and targets are set to meet the diverse learning needs of the individual student
- all students have access to a broad, balanced, relevant and appropriately differentiated curriculum
- development of self-esteem and of values such as respect for all individuals are paramount
- students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities

RELATIONSHIP TO THE SCHOOL MISSION, VALUES, AIMS.

Blackwater Community School is committed to quality education. It aims to create a caring community where students feel cherished, secure and happy. It aims to give students access to a broad and balanced education and to develop their academic, physical, emotional and spiritual potential to the full. Our SEN programme is a reflection of our commitment to the ideal of an inclusive learning community.

DEFINITION

This policy accepts the definition of special educational needs as outlined under the EPSEN Act 2004, “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”

Blackwater Community School recognises that students with SEN are present in every classroom. Some have particular learning needs, others have an identified disability that affects their learning and others have emotional/behavioural issues. Exceptionally able students are those understood to require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for in the general cohort of students.

Goals:

- to identify, access and provide for all students with SEN appropriately and equitably
- to promote and continue to develop a whole school approach for inclusion of students with SEN in all aspects of the school’s operation
- to ensure that pre-enrolment screening of new students is effectively carried out and that all appropriate information in regard to students’ learning needs is available to the appropriate teachers
- to collaborate with the school Guidance Counsellor and Pastoral Care team to ensure that students with special needs are appropriately supported
- to collaborate closely with Year Heads, Tutors and teachers and to assist in the programme planning needed to ensure that all students with special needs are appropriately supported in the classroom
- to ensure that teaching staff are provided with appropriate information in regard to students with special needs and that the information is regularly updated
- to inform staff of the services and resources available
- to ensure that student files are kept up to date and are stored in a confidential manner
- to provide for the Professional Development of teachers in regard to Special Needs

- to assist in the development and implementation of differentiated programmes for students who are gifted

CONTENT:

SEN Provision:

A guiding principle of Blackwater Community School is that each student should be given all the support necessary to achieve his/her full potential.

Access to Support Teaching:

A student may be selected for Support Teaching in our school in the following circumstances:

- A student who has had an educational psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support
- A student who has a Specific Learning Difficulty (SLD) or a General Learning Difficulty (GLD)
- A student identified by teachers as having difficulty with one or more of their subjects
- A student with emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- A student with Traveller status
- A student with Physical difficulties
- A student with English as an Additional Language (EAL) needs
- A student identified as Exceptionally Able through a full educational psychological assessment

Procedures for identifying students with SEN:

The Deputy Principal and the Special Needs Coordinator visit the Primary Schools in the catchment area every Spring. They oversee the confidential transfer of information (both oral and documented) to ensure a smooth transition from Primary to Secondary for the SEN students. A Pupil Transfer form is sent to each Primary School at this time and all information regarding SEN students is collated and sent to Blackwater Community School, with the permission of the individual's Parents/Guardian's. With regard to Psychological Assessments, Medical Reports, etc. parents are requested to submit a copy of same to the school before the summer to facilitate any relevant applications to the Special Educational Needs Officer (SENO). They are also requested to send a copy of an official Irish Exemption if such exists, for their child. In February there is an SEN information presentation for Parents/ Guardians of incoming First Year students which aims to explain how SEN Students in Blackwater Community School.

Identification/ Assessment of students with SEN

Continuum of Support

Blackwater Community School use the Continuum of Support Framework set out by the Department of Education to identify and support children with additional needs. Like this framework, we recognize that special educational needs occur along a continuum ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long-term and that students require different levels of support, depending on their identified additional needs. By using this framework, it helps us implement a staged approach to ensure that our support and interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support, and are informed by careful monitoring of progress.

The Continuum of Support suggest the following levels of support:



Stage 1 Classroom Support

Classroom Support is the most common, and typically the first response to emerging needs. It is a response for pupils who have distinct or individual educational needs and who require approaches to learning and/or behaviour which are additional to or different from those required by other pupils in their class. Problem solving at this level typically begins when a parent or teacher has concerns about an individual pupil. The teacher and parents discuss the nature of the problem and consider strategies which may be effective. Classroom Support incorporates the simple, informal problem-solving approaches commonly used by class teachers to support emerging needs.

Stage 2 School Support

In some cases, interventions at classroom support level are not enough to fully meet the student's special educational needs. School Support may, therefore be required. The class teacher needs to involve the Special Education Teacher Team (SET Team) in the problem-solving process at this point and it involves more systematic gathering of information and the development and monitoring of a School Support Plan.

Stage 3 School Support Plus

If pupils' special educational needs are severe and/or persistent, they are likely to need intensive support. School Support Plus will generally involve personnel from outside the school in the problem solving, assessment and intervention process. The information from Classroom Support and School Support work will provide the starting point for problem-solving at this level. Classroom support and school support will continue to be an important element of the students individual education plan.

All First-Year students sit standardised testing in intelligence, literacy and numeracy and the results of these assessments together with information gathered from the Primary Schools, parents and psychological assessments are used to identify students who will require learning support. In February each year the *CAT4*, *NGRT*, *WRAT4* screening tests are administered to 6th class students wishing to attend the school. The *NGRT* and *WRAT4* results are compared with the *CAT4* results and underperforming students are identified. The relevant parents are then contacted and consulted in relation to their child's support.

Junior Cycle

First year students choose all of their subjects, except for foreign languages prior to starting First year, via the school application form. The provision of a subject 'taster' system exists for First years for French/German for 3 – 4 weeks for each language. After 6 – 8 weeks, most students select to continue with either French or German. However, Learning Support is also an option for SEN students at these class times instead of doing French or German.

All classes are organised on a mixed ability basis in First year. In Second and Third year, the core subjects of Irish, English and Maths are run concurrently for the class groups, facilitating flexibility and movement of students between levels within these class groups. Special needs students benefit from this arrangement as withdrawal, small groups and team teaching can occur at these times. All optional subjects in both Junior and Senior cycle are mixed ability in nature. The flexibility in the timetabling of both Junior and Senior cycle meets the varying needs of all students.

Junior Certificate Modified Programme

This programme is for learning support/resource students in Second and Third year. Parents/Guardians are involved from the start of the Programme.

The programme is structured within a reduced curriculum i.e. students take 9 or 10 subjects (sometimes 8) for Junior Certificate with the peer group. They can be exempt from Religion as an exam subject and may also have an Irish exemption (other subjects may also be considered if necessary, according to the student's need). This means they can have access to extra support.

The programme aims to enable students to realise their full potential through studying a broad and balanced curriculum. It enhances self-esteem by providing a scaffolded framework for the Junior Cert and lightens the academic load for SEN students.

Senior Cycle

After the Junior Certificate, SEN students, like their peers, can opt to do Transition Year and/or Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), Leaving Cert Vocational Programme (LCVP) or the traditional Leaving Certificate.

LCA is modular and practical in nature. Students attend school for four days and participate in work experience one day each week. This aspect of the programme is very motivating for students and many of the students receiving resource/learning support at Junior Cycle opt for the LCA as it meets their needs for Senior Cycle. Students are provided with Literacy Support/Task Support in LCA when necessary.

If a SEN student chooses to participate in Transition Year, LCVP or in the established Leaving Certificate s/he may continue to receive learning support. This support is in place during Irish classes.

Outline of Learning Support model BCS

The withdrawal method of support is in place against the Irish times on the timetable.

Those who possess an Irish exemption, in consultation with parents, students' and staff, may withdraw from class for L.S. or remain in class.

Students who are identified from the above process, who do not possess an Irish exemption, are eligible to reduce in subject areas such as; Religion, French or German.

There is a certain amount of flexibility involved in the withdrawal of LS students due firstly to the needs of the individual and secondly, the flexibility within the timetable and staffing considerations. Team-teaching is another model of support in BCS and this provides support for all students. Gifted students are also identified in this process and are entered in the DCU Programme for gifted children. "Centre for Talented Youth in Ireland"

The Model of SEN provision is focused on the individual needs of the student. It is firmly based on the following principles:

- The support of students with special needs in the school is a whole school responsibility

- The Special Needs Coordinator oversees a support team (of teachers and SNAs i.e. Special Needs Assistants) that assists the class teacher to meet the needs of students with special needs
- Parents/Guardians are involved in the process of supporting their children through their partnership with the class teacher/s, and the support team and school management
- The school Principal/management provides a structure and environment that supports and monitors the learning of all students and is particularly sensitive to the learning needs of students with special needs

The new Special Education Teaching (SET) allocation will provide a single unified allocation or SET needs to each school, based on that school's educational profile. This single allocation allows schools to provide special education teaching support for all students who require such support in their school.

The provision for special needs students is carried out in a number of ways, including, withdrawal of students for extra support on a 1-1 basis, the creation of small class groupings and team-teaching. Learning support time is provided to a student whose scores in literacy and numeracy are under the 10th percentile, but there is a degree of flexibility around this. Some students have modified programmes and timetables appropriate to their individual needs.

Prioritising the needs of students informs the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), which are developed for some students in SEN. There is whole staff involvement in this process and staff are briefed and assisted in this process by the Special Needs Co-ordinator. Once developed, IEP's for the students concerned set clear learning targets. IEPs are agreed with the individual student and his/her Parents/Guardians and are reviewed and updated when necessary. Copies of the IEPs are given to each subject teacher, class tutor and year-head involved with the student.

The Special Needs Department also runs an after-school **Homework Club** for SEN students from First, Second and Third year. Typically, this takes place two evenings a week, from 4 – 5 pm and two teachers work with the students to support and help them with their homework.

[ASD \(Autistic Spectrum Disorder\) classes](#)

A.S.D classes provide a support structure for students with a diagnosis on the autistic spectrum. The aim of the A.S.D unit is to ensure that students with this disorder achieve their potential and enable them to function more effectively in the mainstream classes.

An A.S.D student is characterised by the following impairments:

- Impairment of social and emotional understanding including impaired theory of mind
- Impairment of communication and imagination
- Restricted repertoire of activities and interests

Strategies and methodologies used to support the students include the following:

- Teach (treatment and education of autistic and related communication handicapped children)
- Applied behaviour analysis
- Social stories
- A social skills training programme
- A leisure programme

Teachers in mainstream classes are in constant communication with the teachers in the ASD class and provide differentiated work/tests when required.

Transition of ASD students from primary school.

ASD Teachers and relevant S.N.A visit the primary school in advance. Pupils visit Blackwater Community School with their L.S teacher and S.N.A. They attend the Open Night and complete the First-Year assessment. Parents are welcome to visit and incoming students and parents become reacquainted with A.S.D personnel in late August. They are invited in for an informal visit and can express any concerns they might have.

Transition to the world of work.

Students have the opportunity to take part in work experience in Transition Year, LCA and LCVP. Contacts are established with agencies which support work placements for students with disabilities.

The ASD class works closely with the Career Guidance teacher. Advice and support will also be provided to any student who intends to progress to third level education.

- TTAP (teach transition assessment profile) is used to evaluate students current and potential skills in those areas most important for successful semi/full independent functioning in the home and in the community.

The overall objective of the ASD Unit is to provide the highest quality education, which addresses the specific needs of students with autism spectrum disorder, taking account of the individuality of each student including individual learning styles.

Vision

The Autism Unit will:

- Provide education for each student in a safe, caring and stimulating environment.
- Value each student as an individual and treat him/her with dignity and respect

- Acknowledge the student's entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum which is differentiated to take account of individual needs
- Work in partnership with Parents, Guardians, families, school staff and other professionals in meeting the needs of the student
- Develop skills, understanding and knowledge that will enable each student to achieve his or her full potential
- Build on each student's strengths and celebrate his/her achievements.
- Encourage each student to socialise within the school community
- Place emphasis on the development of communication skills, comprehension skills and skills for independent living

Exceptionally Able students

Bright and gifted students at BCS are accommodated in a variety of different ways, by providing the necessary interventions and supports as and where appropriate, to support them and encourage the development of their special abilities. These mainly include a combination of differentiated learning and the provision of extra tuition and study outside of school hours and term time.

These may include the following:

- Talented youth with careers office- DCU
- Extra after school tuition
- Free study availed of by exam students- Halloween, Christmas, Easter and Mid-term
- Student of the Year, End of Year Awards
- Reinforcement of student performance with Scholarship and Gold Medal Award funding
- Establishment of a network for our students

RACE: Reasonable Accommodation for the State Examinations

Reasonable accommodations are available to students with special needs during state exams. The student's application is processed through the Principal and SEN Department and sent to the Department of Education. Accommodations may include the provision of a reader or scribe, use of a word processor or a tape recorder, use of a separate centre, a spelling waiver etc. A separate application is required for the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate exams. Parents/Guardians should note that if RACE has been granted for the Junior Certificate, the student is automatically entitled to RACE in the Leaving Certificate.

The SEN department prepares the relevant students for the possible accommodations in the learning support class. The student becomes proficient with the accommodation through practice in in-house exams.

SEN DEPARTMENT

- The Department comprises of Special Needs Coordinator, ASD Coordinator, Learning Support Teachers, Resource Teachers, Guidance Counselor, Homework Club Coordinator, and Special Needs Assistants.
- The Special Needs teaching team takes responsibility for the provision of learning support services within the school and has specific responsibility for the effective support of students with special needs. The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in the classroom, including students with SEN.
- Management communicates with the staff adhering to the EPSEN Act 2004 (Section 18).

The SEN Department consists of two fully qualified teachers who hold Diplomas in Learning Support and Special Needs Education. There is also a large team of teachers working in the area, some of whom have availed of Continuing Professional Development in the field. The work of the department is also supported by the Principal, the Deputy Principals, the Guidance Counsellors, Special Needs Assistants, the Pastoral Care Team and Chaplain.

The Special Needs Department is conscious of the importance of whole staff involvement in its day-to-day work. To this end, staff are kept up to date on all issues. External agencies such as NEPS, HSE, SESS and other professionals are invited to work with the whole staff on a regular basis.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The following have responsibility for managing the school response for students with Special Educational Needs.

Board of Management:

- Oversees the development, implementation and review of a Whole School Inclusion Policy
- Enables a periodic review of the range of curriculum provision within the school.

- Provides resources for the professional development of staff in supporting students with special educational needs
- Ensures adequate accommodation and resources
- Ensures that the rights of parents as prescribed in legislation are upheld in the school

The Principal:

- Has overall responsibility for ensuring that the special educational needs of students are met.
- Works with the Board, Staff and Parents/ Guardians in the development of Whole School Inclusion
- Has responsibility for the development of IEPs, their dissemination, implementation and review
- Ensures that mainstream teachers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the education of students with special needs
- Monitors implementation of learning support programmes and selection of students for learning support
- Consults and liaises with outside bodies and agencies.
- Provides for in-service for staff
- Promotes the involvement of Parents/Guardians of students with special educational needs
- Is a member of the Care Team and attends a weekly timetabled meeting

The following work on a day-to-day basis with students with Special Educational Needs:

The Special Needs Coordinator

- Coordinates Individual Educational Programmes (IEP's) or group learning plans for student's with Special Educational Needs in consultation with Parents/Guardians, student, SEN team and teachers
- Coordinates the work of the SEN team
- Is responsible for dealing with DES submissions and concessions
- Processes the Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE) applications for Junior Cycle students. This involves carrying out diagnostic testing to determine Standardised scores and eligibility for RACE.
- Makes application to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) for assistive technology for incoming students with Special Needs
- Organises a department budget and purchase resources

- Facilitates communication with the general staff on SEN issues
- Provides advice to subject teachers as required
- Communicates with Parents/ Guardians, if it is deemed that their son/daughter is in need of Support Teaching
- Liaises with the feeder Primary Schools and gathers information about the learning needs of students with SEN
- Process Irish Exemptions
- Meets the following on a regular basis This is to ensure good organisation and delivery of service
 1. Principal
 2. Senior Cycle Coordinator
 3. ASD Coordinator
 4. Year Heads
 5. Pastoral Care Team
 6. SNA's
 7. Homework Club Coordinator
 8. LS Team
- Has contact with whole staff and provides regular input into Staff Meetings. Uses the school network to relay confidential information regarding SEN and liaises with individual teachers re students' needs
- Has regular contact with Parents/Guardians and relevant professionals from outside agencies

Assistant Coordinator

- Meets with SEN Coordinator and the Principal weekly to discuss issues relating to SEN
- Assists in organising the LS timetable for SEN students, this involves working collaboratively with the SEN Coordinator and Deputy Principal
- Organise LS programmes for Junior & Senior Cycle students and offer advice and support to LS teachers
- Responsible for processing applications for Assistive Technology for Senior Cycle students
- Processes the Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE) applications for Senior Cycle students. This involves carrying out diagnostic testing to determine Standardised scores and eligibility for RACE
- Assists in the assessment of incoming 1st years with the SEN Coordinator and Guidance Counsellor

Learning Support Teacher

- Works with the SEN Coordinator and teachers

- Supports the literacy, numerical, subject specific, IT, social, emotional and behavioural needs of the students
- May be involved in team teaching
- May withdraw students for additional classes in particular subjects
- Assists the SEN Coordinators in the gathering of information for IEP'S
- Advises on RACE
- Core LS team meet with Coordinator on a regular basis

Subject Teacher

- Subject Teacher have first-line responsibility for the education of all students in their classes
- Collaborates with the SEN Coordinator and LS Teachers in identifying students who may have general or specific learning difficulties
- Differentiates the curriculum appropriately, striving to meet the diverse needs of all students in their classroom
- Implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of students with special educational needs. These include; cooperative teaching and learning within mainstream classes, collaborative problem-solving activities, setting objectives and appropriate levels, differentiation, group work, questioning appropriately, using ICT, interventions to promote social and emotional competence, provides learning materials and activities that will enable success.

Guidance Counsellor

- Administers the CAT4 (Cognitive Abilities Test 4) with the SEN Department to incoming First Year students
- Counsels in personal, educational and career development
- Provides career information management
- Consults with the SEN team, staff and Parents/Guardians
- Provides referrals to other professionals and agencies
- Is a member of the Pastoral Care Team and attends a weekly timetabled meeting as part of that team
- Processes Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) applications
- Administers the DATS to Third Year students

The Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

- The SNA has a direct involvement in supporting the student with special educational needs and, therefore, has a valuable contribution to make to the education of the student
- The duties of the SNA are assigned by the Principal acting on behalf of the Board of Management and are outlined in Circular SNA 12/05
- When the SNA is engaged in assisting a student or a group of students in relation to a particular learning task, this should always take place in accordance with the directions of the teacher who has assigned the task
- Shares information with the SEN teaching team about the student's talents, strengths and needs
- Support the implementation of targets relating to the care and access needs of the student
- Provide feedback which will contribute to monitoring and reviewing the student's progress
- Contributes to the development of Pupil Programme Plans which outlines the individual students care needs
- An SNA is expected to treat all matters relating to school business and their work in the school as strictly confidential

Parents/ Guardians

- Blackwater Community school recognises the right of Parents/Guardians of students' with Special Educational Needs to be involved in and consulted about the programme of education available to their child
- Parents are encouraged to actively communicate with the school, if they observe any learning or related difficulties at home
- In all cases where screening, assessment and profiling are conducted, Parents/Guardians are consulted and their permission is sought
- When an IEP is being developed, Parents/Guardians will be consulted. After the preparation of the IEP, Parents/Guardians are entitled to be informed and to receive a copy of the plan. EPSEN Act 2004 (Section 3.10)

Students

The school recognises the importance of including the student, where appropriate, in the development of his/her IEP. Where involvement is appropriate, the student may:

- 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 which will contribute to the monitoring and recording of progress

Engagement with external bodies and agencies

Support and guidance is available to teachers from external bodies and agencies such as National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO), NCSE Support Service, the Inspectorate and health professionals. Based on their assessments, conclusions and recommendations the school endeavor to incorporate these relevant recommendations in developing support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support.

MONITORING, REVIEW & EVALUATION

- The Principal is responsible for ensuring that the Policy on Special Educational Needs Whole School Inclusion Policy is implemented in the school.
- The policy is reviewed every year.
- The review is initiated by the School Development Planning Committee.
- Assessment and monitoring of the Policy are carried out on a regular basis by the SEN team.

Adopted by Board of Management: _____

Review Date Agreed: _____

