

Special Education Needs Policy.

Coláiste Mhuirlinne/ Merlin College
Doughiska,
Galway City.



**Ratified by the Board of
Management on 29th
January, 2015**

Special Needs Policy

Mission Statement

Our aim is to foster an environment of respect, integrity and positive learning in a safe and enjoyable setting.

Definition of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Special educational needs is defined as “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”.

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004 (EPSEN Act)

The 2004 Act was enacted to ensure that persons with SEN can be educated where possible in an inclusive environment, that they can have the same rights to education as persons who do not have SEN and to ensure that such persons are equipped by the education system with the skills they need to participate in society and to live independent and fulfilled lives.

Purpose of SEN Policy

Coláiste Mhuirlinne/ Merlin College is committed to creating a learning environment which is inclusive and supportive of all students in line with its Mission Statement. We strive to ensure that all students, whatever difficulties they may have, are enabled to achieve their potential within the school community. We aim to cater, as far as possible, for the individual needs of all students and to recognise their unique individuality. We also aim to develop students’ confidence and self-esteem and to educate them to their full potential so that socially, academically and morally they are enabled to participate meaningfully in society.

Colaiste Mhuirlinne/ Merlin College will use the resources provided by the Department of Education and Science, both financial and personnel, to make appropriate provision for students with SEN so that those students are able to participate in school life as far as these resources allow. Merlin College will seek adequate resources, equipment and accommodation from the Department with a view to meeting our objectives. The resources sought may include visiting teachers, speech therapists, psychologists, counsellors, technical aid and equipment and other supports deemed necessary.

This policy aims to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to enable the school:

- To make an accurate and appropriate assessment of the needs of students who have SEN
- To specify what additional resources may be required by the student and/or the school
- To provide for the needs identified in as far as resources allocated to the school permit

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 IEP.

Individualised Education Plan (IEP)

Our IEP includes:

- Personal/Background details
- Educational details (primary school details / assessment and learning support details)
- Categorisation of need
- Formal test results
- General profile based on formal/informal assessment
- SEN provision
- Priority needs
- Relevant documentation
- Priority literacy and numeracy needs
- Curricular needs, curricular review
- Extra curricular review

Role of Resource Teachers and Learning Support Teacher

Their responsibilities include:

- To administer standardised tests.
- To reassess students from time to time.
- To draw up IEPs for students, in consultation with students and parents/guardians.
- To identify students for Educational Assessments with NEPS psychologists.
- To fill in the necessary application forms.
- To meet the psychologist on his/her visit to the school.
- Principal.
- The Principal's role in relation to SEN includes.
- To oversee, in consultation with the Board of Management and relevant staff, the development, implementation and review of policies to promote inclusion of students with SEN.

- To monitor the implementation of this and related policies.
- To provide a written annual review of the operation of this policy to the Board of Management.
- To liaise with relevant external bodies including the Department of Education and Science, NEPS, HSE and NCSE.
- To apply to the Department of Education and Science for the necessary teaching and other resources.
- To plan timetable for students with SEN.
- To meet or arrange for meetings with parents and ensure the relevant information is included on application forms.
- To arrange for assessments.
- To monitor progress of the relevant students through records and otherwise.
- To develop and monitor the procedures regarding access to confidential information.
- To arrange for the necessary in-service training for staff.

The SNA's Role includes:

- responsibility for the care and well being of the student in a manner that values and respects him/her.
- supporting the student as well as promoting independence.
- listen clarify and reading material
- encouraging and anticipating
- making notes for HW
- supporting and observing.
- collaborating with the teacher.
- assisting in the Preparation of materials.
- communicating feedback of observations.
- Supporting in the organisation of folders.

Please note that:

- 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.

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Identifying Students with SEN

The school counsellor and/or resource teachers visit the feeder Primary Schools to assess the needs of the students due to start 1ST Year the following Autumn; Parents/guardians are asked to complete an information form. They are also asked to present any assessment reports available on their sons or daughters to the school. These reports will only be available to the Principal, Deputy Principal, counsellors and/or resource teachers and learning support teacher. Relevant information and recommendations will be given to teachers if necessary.

Parents/guardians meet the Principal or Deputy Principal and are asked for any other relevant information.

Prospective 1st Years sit a standardised entrance exam (Drumcondra Test).

In the first term of first year:

All first years also undergo standardised reading tests.

All information gleaned from testing, together with teacher observation, is used to determine if a student has SEN that need to be addressed.

There is also constant monitoring of all students' progress throughout their school careers in consultation with the students themselves, their class teacher, their parents/guardians and the resource and/or learning support teacher.

Students with perceived learning/behavioural difficulties are, with parental approval, recommended for assessment. Where possible, such assessment will be conducted by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). If this is not possible, parents will be advised to have their daughters assessed privately so that their needs can be identified. NEPS psychologists carry out a small number of educational assessments in the school each year. Such an assessment may result in extra resource time being allocated to a student. Any extra resource recommended will be applied for by the Principal.

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is prepared for any 1st, 2nd or 3rd Year student who has been allocated and avails of resource hours. This Plan is drawn up by the Resource Teachers following consultation with the student, his/ her parents/guardians and the teachers.

The post holder for Special Needs and the Deputy Principal apply for Reasonable Accommodation for Certificate Examinations (R.A.C.E.).

R.A.C.E. is available to students with specific learning difficulties or with physical, hearing or visual difficulties. It should be noted that accommodation approved at Junior Certificate does not automatically guarantee approval at Leaving Certificate level.

Board of Management

The Board has a crucial, strategic role in relation to ensuring:

- that the SEN policy is a meaningful one
- that it reflects the mission and ethos of Merlin College
- that it complies with statutory requirements
- that its implementation is monitored on an ongoing basis
- that the policy is reviewed on a regular basis

A key means of managing its role will be through consideration of an annual update on SEN in the school by the Principal.

Counsellors

As noted earlier in this document the Counsellors have responsibility for administering standardised tests. They also contribute to discussions on the effectiveness of the SEN policy and to specific issues arising.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually. The basis of such review will be the report brought by the Principal to the Board of Management. The views and experience of relevant staff, parents and students will be considered in the review.

ASD Centre

Coláiste Mhuirlinne has provision for two classrooms specifically for students on the Autistic Spectrum. Each classroom has a maximum capacity of 6 students. The ASD centre is there to cater for students with Autism within the school's catchment area (See Admissions Policy)

Enrolment to the ASD Centre for any student must meet with the approval of the SENO in collaboration with the school authorities who in turns provides teaching allocation and resources to the Centre.

Parents/ Guardians are advised to meet with school management regarding the ASD Centre a year in advance of applying and to consult with the SENO regarding the most suitable educational environment for their child.

May 2014