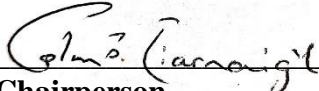


# Special Educational Needs (SEN) Policy



**Coláiste Bríde,  
Enniscorthy,  
Co. Wexford.**

**Ratified by the Board of Management**

  
Chairperson,  
Board of Management

**Review Date: 10<sup>th</sup> November, 2023**

  
Secretary,  
Board of Management

# MISSION STATEMENT

*“We are working to promote a secure and caring environment; Where Respect, Responsibility and Christian commitment grow, Drawing forth the positive of each individual”*

Coláiste Bríde is a Catholic School founded by the Mercy Order under the trusteeship of CEIST. It has a long tradition of academic excellence and is committed to the development of the whole student. It offers a curriculum designed to meet fully the needs of the student.

The school wishes to cater for the academic, spiritual, moral, aesthetic, interpersonal and physical needs of the student. The characteristics of the school are the pursuit of tolerance, compassion and a sense of justice and equality for all.

We aim to develop in each student, confidence, self-respect and respect for others.

The school and its staff value its partnership with parents in meeting the personal and educational requirements of students and staff alike.

**The core values of CEIST are:**

## ***Promoting Spiritual and Human Development***

We believe a knowledge of and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ gives meaning and purpose to our lives.

## ***Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning***

We are committed to excellence and to continually improving the quality of teaching and learning.

## ***Showing Respect for Every Person***

We respect the unique and intrinsic value of every person.

## ***Creating Community***

Our schools are faith communities of welcome and hospitality where Gospel values are lived and where there is special care for those most in need.

## ***Being Just and Responsible***

We seek to act justly and responsibly in all our relationships

## 1. Introduction

Coláiste Bríde is a diverse and vibrant learning community. We are committed to meeting the specific needs of each student in the most individually appropriate manner possible. Our Special Educational Needs Policy aims to outline the form that additional educational support for students with special and additional educational needs takes within the school and the philosophy that underpins it. This policy has been developed by our Special Educational Needs Team (SEN Team) in consultation with senior management, staff and parents.

Our policy has been informed by the following legislation and publications:

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Educational Welfare Act (2000)
- The Equal Status Act (2000)
- The Equality Act (2004)
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
- The Data Protection Act (2018)
- Circulars 14/2017 and 35/2017
- Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs – Post Primary (DES Inspectorate 2007)
- Continuum of Support Post Primary Schools (DES 2010)
- Guidelines for Post Primary Schools – Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (DES 2017)

### 1.1 Inclusion

The term Special Educational Needs (SEN) is defined by the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004 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 difficulty”. Coláiste Bríde welcomes pupils with SEN and in line with the EPSEN Act recognises “the need to provide that the education of people with such needs shall wherever possible take place in an inclusive environment”. Every effort is made to ensure that the school provides an inclusive environment that is non-judgmental and supportive.

### 1.2 Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to outline the structure that additional educational support for students with SEN takes in the school, in line with the school’s mission statement and within the principles of relevant legislation.

### **1.3 Aims of the Policy**

This policy aims to outline our procedures and practices in relation of the following:

- Ensuring the emotional, social, educational and physical well-being of students through a range of supports.
- Identifying all students with SEN and providing for them in a fair manner so that their learning potential and their sense of self-worth and dignity is respected.
- Allocating resources to effectively meet the needs of students with SEN, to ensure an inclusive educational opportunity for all.
- The roles and responsibilities among our school community in supporting students with SEN.
- Track, monitor, review and report the progress of students with additional needs.
- Communicate information between the SEN team, senior management team, year heads and subject teachers, whilst fostering and encouraging positive partnerships with parents/guardians.

## **2. SEN Team and Categories**

### **2.1 Categories of SEN**

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

- Borderline/Mild General Learning Disability
- Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties – ADD / ADHD/ OCD / Selective Mutism
- Specific Learning Difficulty - Dyslexia / Dyscalculia
- Physical Disabilities – DCD / Cerebral Palsy / Arthritis
- Specific Speech and Language Disorder
- Sensory Impairments
- Autism / Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- Irlen Syndrome
- Turner’s Syndrome
- Exceptionally Able Students
- English as an Additional Language
- Medical Conditions – Epilepsy / Cystic Fibrosis / CVID / Narcolepsy / PKU

### **2.2 Roles and Responsibilities**

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

The BOM oversees the development, implementation and review of school policy on SEN. They provide resources for the professional development of staff in supporting students with SEN and ensure adequate classroom accommodation, secure storage space and

effective teaching resources are provided. The BOM will also ensure that the rights of parents, as prescribed in legislation, are upheld in the school.

(ii) The Senior Management Team

The Senior Management Team consists of the Principal and two Deputy Principals. The Senior Management Team have overall responsibility for the development and implementation of inclusive school policies and procedures in relation to the education of students with SEN. They oversee a whole-school approach to assessment and screening to identify needs and to guide the allocation of appropriate supports.

The Senior Management Team ensures effective engagement with feeder primary schools to support the transition of students with SEN. They have responsibility for the allocation of teaching and non-teaching resources to support SEN students.

The Senior Management Team facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers and support staff in relation to the education of students with SEN. They ensure that procedures are in place to facilitate the effective involvement of students, parents and external professionals/agencies in planning for those with SEN.

(iii) The SEN Core Team

The SEN Core Team consists of the SEN Coordinator and two full time SETs, all fully qualified in the area of SEN and Inclusion. They are supported by the Guidance Counsellor and the team of SNAs. The SEN Core Team have responsibility for in-school assessment and intervention. They provide support to students, teachers and parents and link with outside professionals and agencies. The activities of the SEN Core Team may include both teaching and non-teaching duties.

(a) The SEN Coordinator (SENCO)

The SENCO will:

- Communicate with the Senior Management Team on an on-going basis in relation to SEN matters.
- Gather information on incoming SEN students from parents, feeder schools and outside professionals.
- Ensure relevant SEN information on students is updated regularly and accessible to teaching staff.
- Work with feeder primary schools to organise a transition visit for 6<sup>th</sup> class students with SEN.
- Organise and administer the CAT4 assessment for all incoming first year students in collaboration with the Guidance Counsellor.
- Act as a contact person for all parental SEN enquiries, meet with parents when necessary and update them on the progress of their daughters/wards.
- Timetable additional teaching hours under the guidance of senior management.
- Provide, as part of the SEN Core Team, annual information sessions to all teaching staff and those with SEN teaching hours.

- Organise the duties of the Special Needs Assistant team in consultation with senior management.
- Work with Year Heads to track the progress and attainment of students and select those who may be in need of additional support.
- Oversee the development, review and update of all planning documentation for SEN students including Student Support Files, Learning Support Plans and Personal Pupil Plans.
- Assist teachers with SEN hours in setting targets, developing strategies and reviewing the progress of their students.
- Work collaboratively with subject teachers to best support the learning of SEN students in the mainstream classroom.
- Collaborate with senior and middle management on the development of Individual Behaviour Plans.
- Carry out standardised testing relating to the granting of Irish exemptions.
- Act as National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) liaison teacher and engage with senior and middle management and parents in relation to referrals.
- Act as liaison teacher for the Visiting Teacher Service (VTS) and other outside professionals including HSE Primary Care Team, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- Make applications to the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) for SNA hours and assistive technology.
- Identify 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year students who may be eligible for Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Exams (RACE), carry out associated standardised testing and make the applications.
- Assist 6<sup>th</sup> year students making applications to third level via the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE).

#### (b) The Special Education Teacher (SET)

The SET will:

- Assist in the administration of the CAT4 assessment for incoming first year students.
- Organise and administer the NGRT assessment for first year students and follow-up diagnostic testing for selected students.
- Devise and deliver targeted literacy interventions tailored to the individual needs of these students.
- Collaborate with first year English teachers on the delivery of a short literacy-based programme for all students.
- Oversee the development, review and update of Student Support Files and Learning Support Plans.
- Provide, as part of the SEN Core Team, annual information sessions to all teaching staff and those with SEN teaching hours.
- Assist teachers with SEN hours in setting targets, developing strategies and reviewing the progress of their students.

- Work collaboratively with subject teachers to best support the learning of SEN students in the mainstream classroom.

(iv) The Guidance Counsellor

The Guidance Counsellor as part of the SEN Core Team will:

- Organise and administer the CAT4 assessment for all incoming first year students in collaboration with the SENCO.
- Provide counselling in personal, educational and career development
- Manage the provision of career information
- Consult with staff and parents
- Assist students with vocational preparation – course/career investigation, work experience
- Work in conjunction with the SENCO on preparing SEN students for further education and the workplace.

(v) The Year Head

The Year Head will:

- Track the progress of students in their year group and liaise with the SENCO regarding any students of concern.
- Communicate to the SENCO any concerns raised by mainstream subject teachers.
- Support the SEN Core Team in the communication of information regarding students' needs to subject teachers and class tutors.
- Contribute to Student Support Files at the planning, implementation and review stages.
- Communicate with parents as appropriate.

(vi) Mainstream Teacher with Learning Support hours:

The mainstream teacher who is part of the wider SEN Teaching Team will:

- Familiarise themselves with a wide variety of learning approaches, teaching methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning preference and to meet a variety of needs.
- Provide supplementary teaching in literacy, numeracy and curriculum support or EAL on a withdrawal or in-class basis.
- Collaboratively develop a support plan for each of their students, setting clear and achievable targets and implementing strategies to achieve them.
- Review, evaluate and update support plans each term.

(vii) Mainstream Teachers

Within the framework of a whole-school approach to inclusion, mainstream teachers have the primary responsibility for teaching all students, including those with SEN, within their class groups. The mainstream teacher will create a positive learning environment that accommodates and takes cognisance of learning difficulties and differences. They will differentiate teaching strategies, approaches and expectations to suit the range of experience, abilities and learning preferences in their class. The mainstream teacher may become aware of the possibility of general or specific learning difficulties and will bring them to the attention of the SEN Team. Essential consultation takes place between the mainstream teacher and the SEN Teaching Team in setting individual student targets and in outlining and recording student progress. The mainstream teacher is integral in their contribution to identifying and setting the learning targets set out in the SEN students' Learning Support Plans.

(viii) Home School Community Liaison Coordinator (HSCL):

The role of the HSCL Coordinator is to work with the adult(s) in the child's life (including those with SEN), by providing both universal and targeted supports, in order to improve educational outcomes for the child.

(ix) Special Needs Assistants (SNA):

SNAs are allocated to post-primary schools to provide care assistance to students who have special educational needs. SNAs are recruited specifically to assist the school in providing the necessary non-teaching services to students with assessed care needs. The allocation of posts is reviewed each year by the National Council for Special Education.

SNAs may be assigned by the school to students with assessed educational needs compounded by a significant medical need or impairment of a physical or sensory function. SNAs may also be assigned to students whose behaviour is such that they are a danger to themselves or others.

Clear instructions are given to the SNAs by the Principal in relation to the duties that they are expected to carry out. They should communicate clearly with teachers on all aspects of the student's provision. When engaged in assisting a student 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.

SNAs normally carry out their duties on the school premises. On occasion an SNA may be required to accompany a student to a venue outside of the school, to provide assistance, coordination and reassurance.

SNAs are expected to treat all matters relating to school business and their work as strictly confidential.



The duties of an SNA are assigned and supervised by the Principal, on behalf of the Board of Management, in accordance with Circular 30/14.

The role of the SNA is pivotal in the school. We value the huge contribution our SNAs make in helping to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all SEN students in Coláiste Bríde.

#### (x) Students with SEN

Students who are in receipt of Special Education teaching should, as appropriate:

- Be given the opportunity to provide information about their own learning, talents, abilities, interests, skills, wishes and concerns.
- Assist in the identification of priority learning needs, targets and strategies.
- Develop ownership of the skills and strategies they are taught in their special education classes and learn to apply these skills and strategies to improve their own learning.
- Give feedback which will contribute to the review and evaluation of progress.

### **2.3 Additional Roles and Responsibilities**

#### (i) Parents/Guardians

Collaboration and sharing of key information between home and school are essential elements of our SEN policy. Parents/Guardians through their unique knowledge of their own children have much to contribute to their child's learning.

Parents/Guardians should:

- Share any information, reports or reports pending from professionals, and/or concerns regarding their child's development. Copies of professional reports should be provided to the school at the enrolment stage.
- Support the work of the school and keep the subject teacher, SENCO, HSCL and/or Year Head informed of the progress and challenges they observe in their child's learning.
- Attend meetings arranged by the SENCO or Year Head.
- Support the targets outlined in their daughter's support plans and engage in all suggested home-based activities.

#### (ii) Outside Agencies

Outside agencies such as NEPS, VTS, CAMHS and HSE Primary Care Team may be involved in supporting students with SEN. This can take the form of assessments, intervention programmes, family support and provision of advice and guidance to school. This advice may contribute to the Student Support File. Applications to the SENO for assistive

technology are made on behalf of students on a regular basis. Communication with support agencies may take place in person, by phone or email.

### 3. SEN Model of Organisation

#### 3.1 Identification of Students with SEN

##### (i) Incoming Students

The transfer of information is an essential part of ensuring a positive transition from primary to post-primary school. The enrolment form requests information pertaining to the identification of students with SEN. Open Evening is held each year to assist parents and the school with the transition, during which the SEN Coordinator is available to parents to answer questions and provide information about the SEN supports in the school. Parents are encouraged to contact or meet with the SENCO to discuss any specific needs their daughter may have and are requested to inform the school of any special educational, medical or other need, and submit supporting documentation where possible.

Regular communication between the management of Coláiste Bríde and the feeder primary schools helps to identify students who may need additional support. Our Deputy Principals and HSCL contact and where possible visit all feeder schools enrolling new students. These visits help to build the student profile and access information and advice regarding students requiring additional support. Pupil passports are also received from the primary schools.

Prior to entry all incoming students are invited to sit the Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4) which helps to identify students in need of additional support. The New Group Reading Test (NGRT) is administered to 1st year students each September to identify students with literacy-based difficulties. Further standardised or diagnostic testing may be carried out with consent from parents/guardians.

Once special or additional needs have been identified, the SEN Core Team are available to parents/guardians to discuss and arrange supports.

##### (ii) Existing Students

If parents/guardians have a concern regarding their daughter's progress, they should contact the SENCO via the school office or website.

Year Heads, Tutors or subject teachers may have concerns and highlight the need for a student to be considered for additional support in the event of noticeable difficulties arising in class.

If a student has not been identified as having a special educational need until after enrolment, the permission of parents will be sought in order to further assess the student. In-school interventions and strategies will then be used, and the assistance of outside agencies, such as NEPS, may be engaged. If a student has had a prolonged absence due to illness, bereavement etc., transient support may be put in place for the student.

### **3.2 Models of SEN Support**

The Continuum of Support Framework set out by the Department of Education is used to identify and support students with additional needs. Like this framework, we recognise 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. Use of this framework helps us to implement a staged approach, to ensure that support and interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support, and are informed by careful monitoring of progress. By using the Continuum of Support, we aim to identify and respond to students' educational needs to include academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. This, in turn, allows us to identify and respond to needs in a flexible way while engaging with external agencies as required.

Additional support for students may take the form of the following sample models:

- Differentiated programme of work in mainstream classes
- Support Teaching or Team Teaching
- Access to an SNA in some or all classes
- Small group withdrawal for specific topics or interventions
- Individual withdrawal for specific interventions
- Short term targeted interventions and longer-term support
- Support for English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Reduced curriculum in consultation with outside professionals
- Alternative programmes e.g., Level 2 Learning Programme (L2LP)
- Referral to outside agencies

All decisions in this regard are made in consultation with parents/guardians, class teachers and the student.

### **3.3 Support Planning**

#### Student Support File

We use a Student Support File to plan interventions and to track a student's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates us in documenting progress and needs over time and assists us in providing an appropriate level of support to students, in line with their

level of need. Our Student Support File is based on the NEPS template and files are accessible to teaching staff via Microsoft Teams.

All support files should include:

- Cover sheet with student's details
- A timeline of actions
- The priority needs of the student
- Record of support received
- Standardised and diagnostic test scores
- Learning Support Plans submitted by SETs (see below)
- Personal Pupil Plan (PPP) for those in receipt of SNA support (see below)
- Review of progress

Additional documentation such as Psychological Assessment Reports, Speech and Language, Occupational Therapy and Medical reports are stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Resource Room.

### Learning Support Plans

Learning Support Plans are completed by SETs and mainstream teachers with learning support hours for each student they are supporting in a one-to-one or small group setting. These plans outline the targets for each student along with strategies to help achieve them and details of monitoring and reviewing arrangements.

### Personal Pupil Plan

Each student receiving support from an SNA will have a PPP. This document outlines the care needs of the student and the role the SNA plays in supporting them in the school environment. The SNAs work in collaboration with the SENCO to complete the plans.

## **3.4 Timetabling of Additional Teaching Hours**

Support teaching and team-teaching hours are assigned by the Principal as part of the main timetabling process each June. Additional hours of learning support are allocated by the Principal to individual teachers. The SENCO, under the guidance of the Principal then assigns these periods to both students and teachers.

The process of timetabling additional support hours is guided by the identified needs of our students and every effort is made to effectively deploy our teaching resources to ensure an appropriate and high-quality learning experience for our SEN students.

## **3.5 Tracking, Recording and Reviewing Progress**

Systems are in place to ensure the regular tracking, recording and reviewing of progress of students in receipt of additional support. These include:

- Review of term reports by SENCO and Year Heads
- Written reviews of Learning Support Plans and PPPs by SETs
- End of year written review of Student Support Files by SEN Core Team

- Regular communication between SEN Team, subject teachers and parents/guardians
- Student and parental feedback regarding the provision of SEN support

### **3.6 Examinations**

Applications are made each year to the State Examinations Commission (SEC) for Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Exams (RACE) for Junior Cycle and Leaving Cert students.

## **4. Communication**

### **4.1 Access to Information**

Key information relating to the special and additional needs of students is shared with teaching staff via the VS Ware portal. In addition, all Student Support Files are accessible to teachers via Microsoft Teams. This information is updated regularly by the SEN Core Team. It is the responsibility of individual teachers to access this information, ensure confidentiality and keep up to date on the needs of their own students.

### **4.2 SEN and Mainstream Teachers**

Each September the SEN Core Team holds an information session for all teaching staff. This provides the opportunity to update staff on all matters relating to SEN including access to student information and interpretation of standardised test results and to share learning and experience of differentiated approaches to teaching, learning and assessment.

The SEN Core Team works collaboratively with mainstream teachers in an ongoing capacity to provide support and guidance to ensure that all students can access the learning in their subject classes to the best of their ability.

### **4.3 SEN Team**

The SEN Core Team meet for an hour each week to discuss the planning, progress and review of SEN support in the school. In addition, the SENCO holds a weekly meeting with the team of SNAs to discuss any concerns and review student progress.

The SENCO attends a weekly meeting of the Student Care Team with Senior Management, the Guidance Counsellor, HSCL and Year Heads.

### **4.4 Parents/Guardians**

The SENCO acts as the main liaison for parents/guardians regarding SEN matters. The SENCO may work collaboratively with individual Year Heads or members of senior management and parents. Coláiste Bríde recognises the important and unique role that parents/guardians play in supporting students with SEN and encourages them to be active participants in planning and decision making for their child's educational progress. This involvement is facilitated by regular communication which may take the form of phone calls, emails or face to face meetings.

This policy is not exhaustive, and the Principal may on occasion need to take a decision based on best practice for the good of other students, staff and the school. The parents/guardians and the chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed in the event of such an occurrence.

### **Review and Evaluation**

This SEN policy will be reviewed on an on-going basis and may be amended following consultation with the school community.