



Scoil Mhuire, Trim

Special Educational Needs Policy

MISSION STATEMENT

Scoil Mhuire seeks to provide a quality education for all its students in a challenging and positive environment. We are committed to the holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised.

RATIONALE

Scoil Mhuire is an inclusive school and welcomes students of all abilities. We strive to ensure that all our students have a rich and rewarding school experience, irrespective of ability and need. We endeavour to provide for the fullest possible inclusion of students with special educational needs in all school activities.

LEGISLATION

Scoil Mhuire is committed to its role in the successful implementation of international commitments and the most recent education legislation, in particular the EDUCATION ACT of 1998, the EDUCATION WELFARE ACT (2000), the EQUAL STATUS ACT (2000), the EPSEN Act (2004) and the Education (Provision in Respect of Children with Special Educational Needs) Act 2022. We fully subscribe to the underlying principles of the legislation: partnership, accountability, transparency, inclusion and respect for diversity, parental choice and equality.

The EPSEN Act puts forward a very challenging and compelling vision for future SEN (Special Educational Needs) provision in Ireland. The main components include:

- *“Children with SEN will have an enforceable right to an appropriate education in an inclusive setting.*
- *Children with SEN will participate in, and benefit from, education on a par with their peers who do not have SEN.*
- *Children with SEN will achieve outcomes from education which will facilitate them in transferring to the workplace, progressing to further education and lifelong learning, participating meaningfully in economic, social, and cultural activity and, in effect, in living fulfilled lives independently in the community.”*

Scoil Mhuire is fully committed to the implementation of the above vision.

CATEGORIES OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

To date, Scoil Mhuire has provided for the following categories of students with Special Educational Needs

- Learning Support Students
- Physical Disabilities e.g. Dyspraxia, Spina Bifida, Hydrocephalus
- Hearing Impairment
- Visual Impairment
- Borderline/ Mild General Learning Disabilities
- Moderate General Learning Disability
- Down Syndrome
- Specific Learning Difficulties e.g. Dyslexia, Dyscalculia
- Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties e.g. ADD/ADHD
- Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders - Asperger's Syndrome
- Students with English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Students with medical conditions e.g. Di George Syndrome, Post viral fatigue Syndrome, Narcolepsy, Catalepsy

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

➤ Board of Management

The Board of Management ensures that:

- *section 2* of the EPSEN Act 2004 is complied with:
“A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with—
 - (a) the best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under this Act, or*
 - (b) The effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated.”*
- Parents/guardians of a student with special educational needs are consulted with regard to, and invited to participate in, the making of all decisions of a significant nature concerning their child's education.
- all relevant teachers and other relevant employees of the school are aware of the special educational needs of students.

- teachers and other relevant employees of the school are aware of the importance of identifying students who have special educational needs.
- awareness among students at the school of the needs of persons with disabilities. (EPSEN Act 2004)
- where facilities for a particular special educational need are not available in the school, every reasonable effort will be made to procure appropriate facilities.

➤ **Principal**

The Principal follows the guidelines for the inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs Post-Primary which state the following:

“Under current legislation the principal of the school has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the special educational needs of students are met. As a consequence, the principal has the general responsibility for establishing and promoting whole-school policies and procedures that are supportive of the learning of all students, including those with special educational needs. In order to discharge his/her responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner, the principal should:

- Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school’s policies and procedures relating to the inclusion of students with special educational needs.
- Oversee a whole-school approach to assessment and screening to identify needs and to guide the allocation of appropriate supports.
- Ensure effective engagement with feeder primary schools to support the transition of students with special educational needs.
- In collaboration with the in-school management team, discharge a key function in the deployment of staff, allocation of resources, organisation of students and timetabling.
- Ensure that systems are in place for effective sharing of relevant information on students’ needs with all subject teachers.
- Facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to the education of students with special educational needs and ensure that all school staff (subject teachers and special education teachers, guidance counsellors, special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area.
- Ensure that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents/guardians, students and external professionals/agencies.
- *work with the board of management, teachers and parents/guardians in the development, implementation and review of whole-school policies that promote the inclusion of students with special educational needs.*

- *ensure that all such policies are described in the school plan.*
- *continuously monitor the implementation of whole-school policies and provision for special educational needs*
- *consult and liaise, as required, with relevant external bodies and agencies, such as the Department of Education, the National Educational Psychological Service, the National Council for Special Education, the Health Service Executive, and local agencies.”*

The principal works with the special educational needs department within the school to provide an effective and holistic response to students’ needs throughout the curriculum.

➤ **Subject Teachers**

The subject teachers have primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in the classroom, including students with special educational needs.

- They have responsibility for creating a classroom environment that enables all students gain access to the curriculum and to advance their learning.
- They assist in the identification of students in need of Learning Support
- They consult and co-operate with the special educational needs department.
- They differentiate their teaching practice.
- They have access to all information likely to be relevant to teaching or supervising a student with special educational needs.

➤ **Special Educational Needs Department**

The special educational needs department consists of trained special educational needs teachers who liaise closely with the Principal to:

- assume an overall responsibility for co-ordinating the school’s provision for the inclusion of students with special educational needs.
- liaise with teachers who provide learning support.
- create and foster a school climate of inclusiveness.
- disseminate relevant information from students’ psychological reports and their needs to subject teachers.
- meet with parents/guardians of incoming students with special educational needs.
- gather and collate information about in-coming students from primary schools and parents/guardians.
- facilitate the individual and group withdrawal of students, and to assist in the organisation of class supports i.e. S.N.A. support.
- assess and identify students with special educational needs.
- assist in programme planning for individual students with special educational needs and as appropriate, provide advice to subject teacher colleagues.
- monitor and evaluate individual students with special educational needs.

- manage, file and store documentation relating to special educational needs students.
- apply for reasonable accommodation in state examinations (R.A.C.E.) for special educational needs students.
- keep up to date with all developments in the area of special educational needs and engage in CPD.
- ensure that students receive all relevant supports i.e. Assistive Technology, Reading Pens, Learning support/Resource hours, access to a special needs assistant (SNA), etc.
- offer academic, behavioural and pastoral support to all special educational needs students.
- liaise with support personnel and external professionals and agencies.

➤ **Guidance and Counselling Department**

Members of the Guidance and Counselling department will provide:

- Educational Guidance regarding subject choice.
- Career Guidance on progression routes for students receiving Support/Resource hours.
- Personal Counselling as required.

➤ **Special Needs Assistants (S.N.A.)**

Special needs assistants (S.N.A.) are allocated to post-primary schools to provide care assistance to named students who have special educational needs. The duties of an S.N.A. include:

- assisting students to board and alight from buses.
- assisting with the organisation of bags, books, lockers, classwork and homework where necessary.
- assisting students with their use of equipment in class.
- supervision of students, when necessary, for example at break times.
- ensuring easy movement of students from class to class.
- general assistance to subject teachers, with duties of a non-teaching nature.
- assisting with out-of-school visits, walks, examinations and similar activities.
- supporting students in staying on task in class
- ensuring that Assistive Technology is not mislaid and is properly maintained and used in class.
- other appropriate duties as may be determined by the needs of the students and the school (Circular SNA 12/05).

➤ **Students:**

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.
- 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.

➤ **Parents/Guardians:**

Collaboration and sharing of information between home and school are essential.

Parents/Guardians should:

- share information, reports, and concerns regarding their child`s development. Copies of professional reports to be provided to the school.
- support the work of the school and keep the relevant staff members informed of the progress and challenges in their child`s learning.
- attend meetings with members of the Special Educational Needs department.

OUTSIDE AGENCIES

Scoil Mhuire is constantly in communication with outside agencies to help/support special educational needs students.

There are a variety of agencies with whom we liaise.

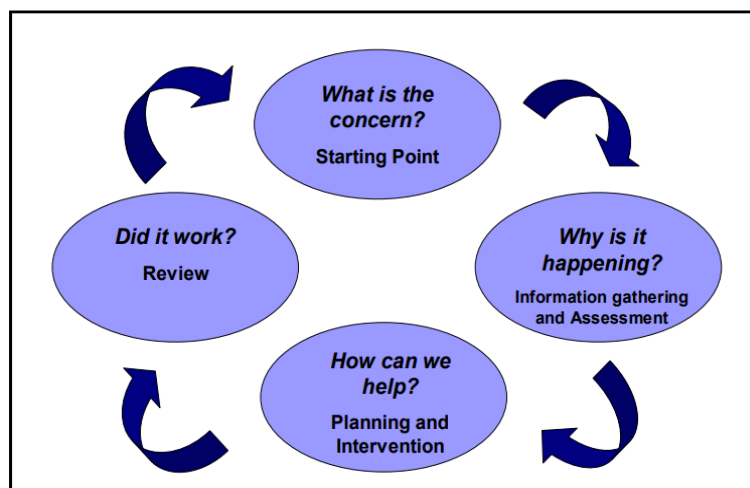
- ✓ Feeder Primary Schools
- ✓ National Education Psychology Service (NEPS)
- ✓ Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO)
- ✓ National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- ✓ Health Service Executive (HSE)
- ✓ Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- ✓ Department of Education Visiting Teacher Service
- ✓ State Examinations Commission Reasonable Accommodation (R.A.C.E.) Section
- ✓ Trim Family Resource Centre
- ✓ Professional Education Support Board - Oide
- ✓ TULSA
- ✓ Education Welfare Officer, DES.

IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The Continuum of Support

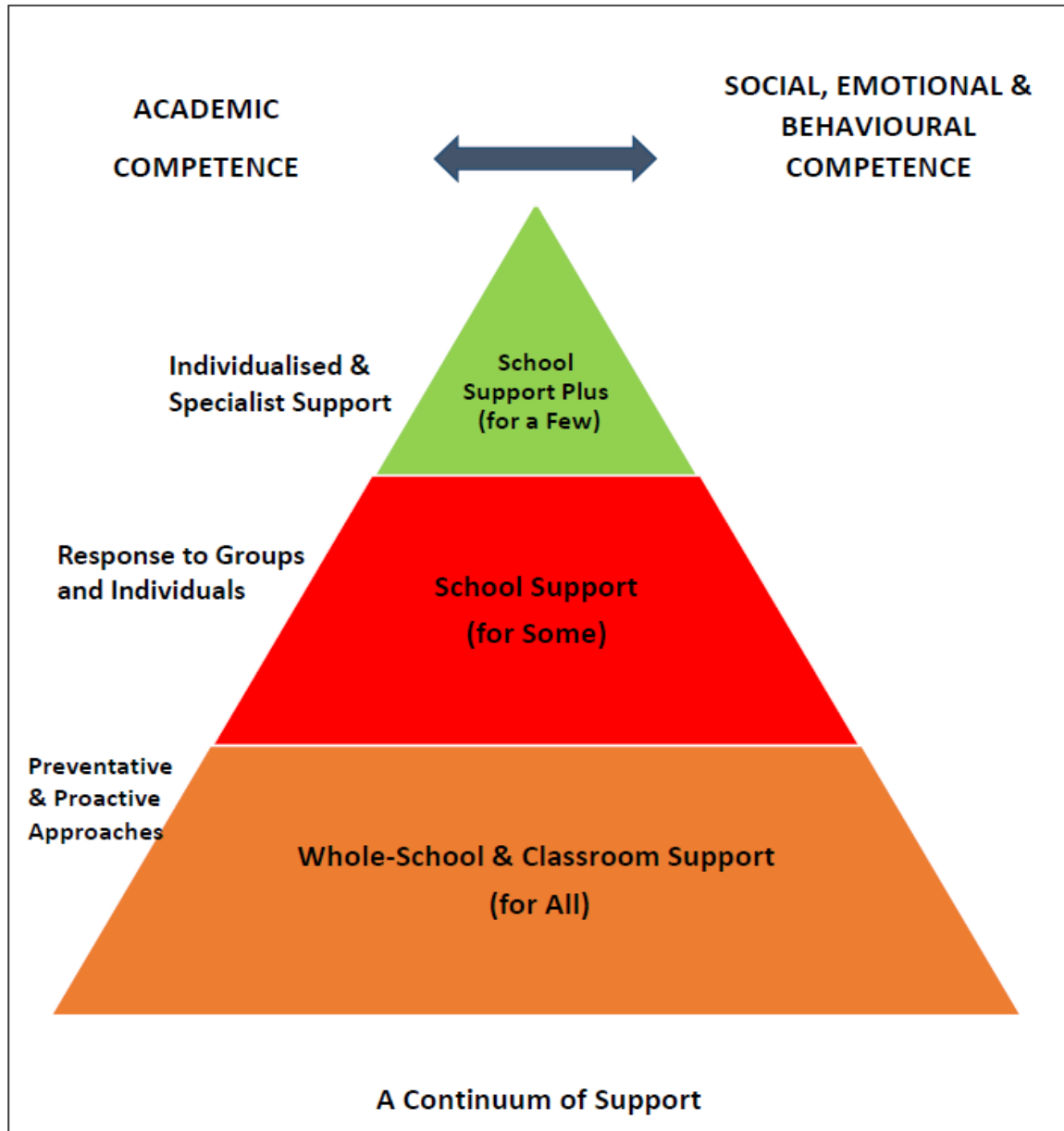
The Department of Education has set out the Continuum of Support framework to assist schools in identifying and responding to students' needs. This framework recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long term, and that students require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs. Using this framework helps to ensure that interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support, and that they are informed by careful monitoring of progress.

The Continuum of Support is a problem-solving model of assessment and intervention that enables schools to gather and analyse data, as well as to plan and review the progress of individual students. This problem-solving process is illustrated as follows:



The Continuum of Support provides a framework for schools to enable them to identify and respond to students' needs in a flexible way. This process is also supported through engagement with external professionals, as required.

The Continuum of Support suggests the following levels of support:



Information Gathering

- Parents/guardians advise members of special education needs department re: special educational needs at “Open Night” or in pre-scheduled meetings.
- Parents/guardians advise school re: special education needs on Application Form prior to commencing first year or when transitioning from another second level school.
- Meetings between member(s) of special educational needs department and parents/guardians to provide information/documentation in relation to the special educational needs of the student(s).
- Entrance assessments may reveal special educational needs not yet identified. Contact then made with parents/guardians to discuss the issues arising.
- Liaison with primary schools.
- Educational Passports and 6th Class report cards received from primary schools.

- All staff are provided with relevant information relating to students with special educational needs at the beginning of each academic year with updates provided when relevant.
- Subject teachers may identify students with suspected special educational needs through class tests, correction of work and observation. Referral to the special educational needs department can then be made. Following assessment by the special educational needs department, they may contact parents/guardians to inform them of the results of the assessment. The decision may then be taken to provide learning support for the student(s) in school or refer the student(s) to N.E.P.S. for a psychological assessment.
- Parents/Guardians may avail of private psychological assessments and other private assessments. The resulting reports are then provided to the school.
- Parents/Guardians may contact Scoil Mhuire with concerns relating to their child`s learning needs.

TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. Open Night – October of each academic year

Members of special educational needs department are available to meet parents/guardians and students to discuss the supports available to students in Scoil Mhuire.

2. Meetings with Parents/Guardians

One to one meetings are arranged with parents/guardians of incoming students with special educational needs on acceptance of a place in Scoil Mhuire.

3. Assessment day – In first or second week of 1st Year

Incoming first year students are assessed using the CAT4 and NGRT reading test. Support is given to students with special educational needs when necessary.

4. Meetings with Parents/Guardians

Additional one to one meetings with parents/guardians of incoming students with special educational needs, if necessary. Information gathered to facilitate applications to NCSE for supports in the form of assistive technology/S.N.A. support.

5. Meetings with relevant outside agencies

Meetings are organised with relevant outside agencies who may have worked with students in primary school e.g. Visiting Teacher Service, Trim Family Resource Centre.

6. Meetings with primary schools

Members of the special educational needs department liaise with representatives of primary schools to discuss how best to achieve a successful and stress free transition from primary school to Scoil Mhuire.

7. School Visits

Parents/Guardians, students and/or primary school teachers visit the school prior to commencing 1st Year to support smooth transition of SEN students to secondary school.

8. August/September of 1st Year

All first-year students are mentored by the Athrú team of students and liaison teacher.

Relevant additional supports organised for students with special learning needs are in place.

PROVISION OF LEARNING SUPPORT

Where possible the following provisions will be implemented. The provisions are reviewed on an annual basis in line with student needs:

Support for All:

- Differentiated teaching.
- Cooperative teaching/Team teaching.
- Use of Formative and Summative Assessments.
- Use of academic tracking and student mentoring.
- Positive classroom environments and positive feedback and “good notes”.

Support For Some:

- Small group withdrawal.
- Some one to one support.

In addition to the support for All.

Support for a Few:

- One to one support.
- Reduced Timetable.
- Participation in the L2LP programme.
- Use of Assistive Technology and Reading pens.

In addition to the support for All and support for Some.

Assistive Technology:

If a student has a recommendation for assistive technology in a professional report, an application will be made to the Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) for the student to

have the use of a device for educational purposes for the duration of their time in Scoil Mhuire. The student will sign an agreement pertaining to the appropriate use of the device. Reading pens will be made available to students by SEN teachers.

REASONABLE ACCOMODATIONS FOR STATE EXAMINATIONS (RACE)

Applications are made by the Special Education Teachers for RACE for students with special educational needs sitting the State examinations as per the criteria laid down by the State Examination Commission. Information on RACE is available at www.examinations.ie .

Where resources permit and when necessary, reasonable accommodations (scribes, readers, Reading Pens, etc) will be made available to those students who qualify for RACE for House and Mock examinations.

EVALUATING/MONITORING/REVIEWING PROGRESS

- All teachers are responsible for monitoring students` progress e.g. formal and informal observation, i.e. class tests, homework etc.
- Learning support teachers monitor students` progress and liaise with special educational needs department.
- Special educational needs department meet weekly for evaluation and review.
- Care team meet weekly to discuss care needs/progress of students including those with special educational needs.
- “Open door” policy for students, parents/guardians to discuss any issues arising.
- All staff kept up to date on the special educational needs of students.

Ratified at Board of Management meeting: 9th May 2024