

Shimna Integrated College

Special Educational Needs

Learning Support Policy

Reviewed January 2013

LEARNING SUPPORT POLICY

The Philosophy

The learning support policy for the college is based around the guiding principles for the college which were established by the founding parents in March 1993. The college was established with the firm commitment to all ability teaching and learning: *“The College cannot be truly integrated unless children of all abilities are encouraged to attend.”* As a college we have also for many years admitted students with a wide spectrum of physical disabilities and medical conditions. We are well placed to satisfy the requirements of the Special Educational Needs Disability Order due to the accessibility of our building and the structures of our learning environment.

All Ability Teaching and Learning

The foundation of our learning support policy is a child centred approach throughout the curriculum, facilitated by a commitment to class sizes of approximately twenty students and timetable slots to suit the specific demands of each subject. It is our philosophy that **learning support is the responsibility of each teacher**. Each teacher is responsible for challenge, differentiation and support within the classroom. Therefore the learning support department is made up of *all* teachers under the leadership of our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO).

It is our belief that **every student has special educational needs** and the admissions policy at Shimna reflects the reality that children with a wide range of differing abilities will work together in the classroom. **An all ability classroom works best if every student’s needs are seen as special**. This includes those with the potential to be high academic achievers. Central to this policy is the need to encourage autonomous learning and empathy with others working in the same classroom.

The Board of Governors will monitor access improvement on an ongoing basis as stipulated in the Special Education Needs Disability Order (SENDO) 1995.

Aims of the learning support policy:

- 1 to assist every student who has learning needs across the full academic and physical ability range;
- 2 to enable and empower all members of staff to encourage learning and achievement for all students;
- 3 to promote the early identification of students with special needs through the Pathways system;
4. to encourage and enable each department and subject area to take responsibility for the learning needs of each student and to ensure the availability of appropriate resources;
- 5 to implement the Code of Practice and the SENDO;
- 6 to work with parents as and when necessary to enhance the learning experience of their children;
- 7 to work with outside agencies as and when appropriate.

The Practice

Year 8

The new intake of students is arranged in **all ability classes** of approximately twenty

students. Information is gathered from application forms and feeder primary schools regarding students with SEN. As teachers get to know their students they may come across additional undocumented needs. Teachers should approach the SENCO and fill in a Pathways form for any student about whom they are concerned. Pathways forms are available in the staff-room. The SENCO will work with the class teachers to provide suitable support. All year 8 students are assessed early in term one using the CEM MIDYIS analysis that is widely used by post-primary schools in the UK. This provides the school with additional information for identifying educational needs.

Year 9

Students are in all ability group classes, except for Maths where they are set in two similar ability groups to allow for curriculum extension and support as required.

Year 10

Students are in all ability classes, except for Maths and Science where they are set in two similar ability groups across each pair of form groups. Special arrangements made for individual students during year 8 and year 9 will continue.

Students on the register are assessed for exam consideration at the start of year 11. If students are to qualify for extra time in public exams they must also be in the habit of using extra time during internal examinations. Students with learning difficulties receive extra time in assessments at KS3 at the discretion of the subject teacher.

Year 11 and 12

Year 11 students follow the GCSE subject options they have chosen. Subject teachers will decide the tier of entry in Year 12.

Throughout the year there will be regular opportunities at pastoral care meetings to exchange information about individual students. It is essential that subject teachers communicate with the form teacher, the SENCO and colleagues about any student they feel needs particular assistance.

Learning Support Resources

A learning resource base is located between the library and the information technology resource base. Access is through the information technology resource door. These rooms are equipped with resources for students and staff.

Most departments offer weekly after school support clubs between October and May, e.g Maths club runs from 3.30-4.30 pm on Wednesdays.

All students are encouraged to attend homework club in the library, or computer room 237, after school where supervised study with teaching assistance is available.

Students with recognized literacy difficulties are encouraged to word process homework and coursework where possible. Statemented students with funded tuition hours receive weekly one to one tuition in literacy and/or numeracy outside of class.

The Code of Practice Relating to Special Needs

The Code of Practice for special Needs is part of the Education (N.I.) Order 1996 which was implemented in September 1998. The Code provides us with guidance on provision for students who have special needs. The meaning and requirements of each stage are outlined below:

Stage 1

Subject teachers express concern and inform the SENCO through the Pathways system. The SENCO collects information from other subject teachers, form teacher and an assessment of needs is made. Parents are consulted.

Class teachers and SENCO determine provision for the student. The student's progress is monitored and reviewed.

Stage 2

The subject teacher retains responsibility for working with the student in the classroom, assists in the drawing up of an Education Plan for the student and monitors and reviews progress.

Stage 3

The subject teacher retains responsibility for working with the student in the classroom and implements the education plan.

The SENCO requests appropriate specialist help from outside the school.

Stage 4

The subject teacher retains responsibility for working with the student in the classroom. The SENCO refers the student to the SEELB Board to request a statutory assessment.

Stage 5

The subject teacher retains responsibility for working with the student in the classroom. The Board, having gathered evidence through statutory assessment, may decide to issue a statement. The final statement sets out exactly how the child's needs should be met in a mainstream school. This could involve funded one to one tuition or the provision of classroom assistance.

The LEARNING SUPPORT POLICY for the college is available on the school website. All teachers should have an up to date copy.

A register of students who have a special educational need is made available to teachers by the SENCO.

A separate Individual Education Plan (**IEP**), outlining the student's difficulties and suggested general targets and strategies is provided to teachers for each student on the register. Teachers should annotate this appropriately.

Education Board advice booklets on specific needs are available in the staffroom.

The register and IEPs are confidential and must be stored securely.

The Role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

- To oversee the implementation of the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs
- To collect information from feeder schools and other agencies about students arriving with identified special educational needs.
- To retain a record of each child identified as having special educational needs, the area of need and the action taken by the class teacher, learning support coordinator and the college as a whole.
- To help identify more able students and ensure their needs are addressed.
- To help identify students with specific learning difficulties.
- To monitor the progress of all identified students and make reports when necessary
- To liaise with external agencies
- To liaise with parents of students identified as having special needs
- To facilitate annual review meetings and action agreed outcomes
- To arrange relevant documentary evidence for special examination consideration
- To encourage students to use the learning support resource base to enhance their learning.
- To encourage staff to make suggestions/recommendations on the learning support policy and learning support resource base.
- To attend the necessary in-service training offered by outside agencies and disseminate the information to colleagues.

The Role of the Classroom Assistant

Below are some guidelines recommended in the SEN Manual for schools (1996) and the SEELB 'Guidance for non-teaching staff working in schools' which each classroom assistant should read.

The classroom assistants working in the college are each funded directly by the Department of Education to give individual support to named students.

The purpose of the classroom assistant is to enable students with special needs to access the curriculum so that it is broad, balanced and relevant to his/her needs. As the funded hours permit, each assistant will be in class when the child is in class and work at the direction of the teacher to support learning.

Classroom assistants are regarded as valued colleagues in the classroom. They are part of the whole-school team approach to addressing Special Needs and have a valuable contribution to make towards the education of their children.

The presence of the classroom assistant should not become a form of segregation for the child. It could be overwhelming for a child to have one person stay with him or her for the whole day or week. Some children may find it impossible to integrate fully under those circumstances. As long as the classroom assistant is used to further the individual child's access to the curriculum, then a sensible balance between work with the individual, work with a group containing the individual, and general class support is acceptable.

Discipline is the teacher's overall responsibility, but it may well be an issue for a new classroom assistant. Teachers' support on this issue will be appreciated by the classroom assistant, as their primary role is to raise self esteem and to encourage autonomy.

Within the classroom the classroom assistant will help to run any teaching programmes you may have for the particular student. They can help (as appropriate) with physical skills, hearing readers, note taking, dressing, undressing, adapting and preparing materials and organizing resources, displaying children's work, giving feedback and suggesting development.

As the classroom assistant is with the child(ren) all day and in all subjects he/she will get to know their child(ren) well. The assistant is therefore well placed to know the strengths and weaknesses of the child across the curriculum, and can be consulted by the teacher. The class teacher can agree working arrangements with the classroom assistant. For example, can the assistant give permission for a child to go to the toilet or mark a child's work? If you need planning time with the classroom assistant then arrange it at a time convenient to both parties.

Deployment when normal duties are not possible.

When the assistant's designated child is absent the classroom assistant will be redeployed at the direction of Deborah McDowell, who oversees the day to day allocation of classroom assistant time and duties. The classroom assistant's first

priority is to ensure that notes and homeworks are kept up to date. In the case of prolonged absence of the child the assistant's priority is to liaise between the college and parents/guardians, and keeping parents supplied with work to be completed at home where the child's condition permits.

It may be that another assistant is absent and their child needs assistance, or other children in the same class may benefit from the general assistance available. The class teacher should have alternative work for the classroom assistant, as the assistant needs to feel gainfully employed. On the rare occasion where the class teacher may not need the classroom assistant Deborah McDowell will have contingency plans ready.

At times **when a target child is away and other support is not needed**, other practical jobs may be available; but these should be agreed after discussion with Deborah McDowell. Teachers are welcome to leave photocopying into the box at the back of the staffroom where it will be processed in date order. However, this should be done well in advance as next day completion is unlikely. Most photocopying will be done in flexi-time after school. Advance resource preparation is another useful classroom support activity.

Opportunities for classroom assistant development and training might also be taken at unexpected times like this. Observing other colleagues, reading useful documents, working with a teacher on basic skills training, observing children with other types of special need or of different ages, are just some of the useful activities that might be undertaken. Classroom assistants themselves will often have a clear idea which activity would have greatest the benefit.

The Board of Governors agrees with, and fully supports the contents and implementation of this policy.