

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 in line with our school admissions Policy. 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) and the EPSEN Act (2004). 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 provision in Ireland. The main components are:

- *“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 as respects Scoil Mhuire –
“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 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 of 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

- *work with the board of management, teachers and parents 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 and Skills, 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 play a very important role in the successful inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools.

- 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 his/her 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 consisting of two 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 subjects 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 organise in 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, 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.'s)**

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

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 and Skills Visiting Teacher Service
- ✓ DES Reasonable Accommodation Section

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 in the resource room to discuss the supports provided by Scoil Mhuire.
- 2. Meetings with Parents/Guardians**
One to one meetings are arranged with parents/guardians of incoming students with special educational needs once a place in Scoil Mhuire has been accepted.
- 3. Assessment day** – late January/early February
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 additional hours and/or assistive technology/S.N.A .support
- 5. Meetings with primary schools**
Members of the special educational needs department visit and meet representatives of primary schools, if necessary to discuss how best to achieve a successful and stress free transition from primary school to Scoil Mhuire
- 6. August/September**
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

IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

- Parents/guardians advise members of special education needs department re: special education needs at “Open Night”
- Parents/guardians advise school re: special education needs on “application to enrol” form in November prior to commencing first year
- 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 education 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 first year students are advised to attempt all subjects on the curriculum. As the academic year progresses some students find the demands of a full curriculum too intense and in consultation with Parents/Guardians, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Subject Teacher and Principal, a decision may be taken that the student would have their timetable reduced and where possible students may receive learning support.
- All staff provided with relevant information relating to students with special educational needs at the beginning of each academic year
- 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 contact Scoil Mhuire with concerns relating to their daughter’s learning needs.

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:

- Scoil Mhuire is aware of the new allocation model
- Scoil Mhuire will endeavour to provide for the fullest possible inclusion of Special Educational Needs students within the framework of the new model of Allocation
- Small class groupings for Irish, English and Mathematics – one in each of 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th year
- Small group withdrawal for students who have Irish exemptions and/or who do not study a foreign language
- One to one withdrawals for students who follow a reduced curriculum
- In class support and team teaching

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: 27th September 2017

To be reviewed: September 2018