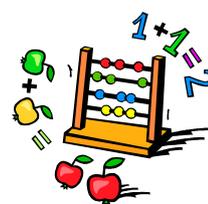
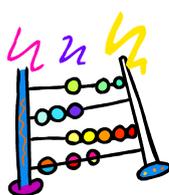
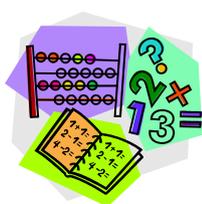


**ST. ATTRACTA'S SENIOR NATIONAL SCHOOL
MEADOWBROOK
DUBLIN 16**



**LEARNING SUPPORT
TACAÍOCHT FOGHLAMA**



**SCOIL SHINSIREACH NAOMH ATHRACHT
CLUAIN GHLAISE
ÁTH CLATH 16**

UIMHIR ROLLA: 19716B

Scoil Shinsireach Naomh Athracht, Cluain Ghlaise, Áth Cliath 16

Learning Support ~ Tacaíocht Foghlama

St. Attracta's Senior National School, Meadowbrook, Dublin 16.

INTRODUCTION & RATIONALE

St. Attracta's Senior National School lies at the foothills of the Dublin mountains and was established in 1980. We aim to provide a quality education in a caring Catholic, christian community for boys and girls from 3rd to 6th class in primary school. Our primary catchment area is Meadowbrook and Ballinteer but it also covers Dundrum, Rathfarnham and Churchtown. Currently, we have 21 teachers including the Principal, 12 classroom teachers and 8 support teachers (6 full-time, one part-time and one shared with the Junior School) as well as 4 Special Needs Assistants.

The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance to teachers, parents and other interested persons on the provision of effective support to pupils with learning difficulties and special needs in St. Attracta's Senior School, with a view to enabling all our pupils to meet with self-confidence and assurance the demands of life, both now and in the future.

MISSION STATEMENT

St. Attracta's Senior National School is a Catholic co-educational primary school which provides a happy caring and secure learning environment in which the individual student is enabled to achieve his/her full potential.

St. Attracta's Senior National School promotes excellence in teaching and learning. The school community that we create is welcoming, collegial, safe, respectful and inclusive of all its members. All aspects of the child, academic, spiritual, moral and cultural are cherished.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

AIMS OF LEARNING SUPPORT

The principal aim of learning support is to optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties and special needs to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy, numeracy and life skills needs before leaving primary school.

Subsidiary Aims:

- to enable pupils to participate in full curriculum for their class level
- to develop positive self esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in these pupils
- to enable these pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners
- to involve parents in supporting their children's learning through effective parent-support programmes
- to promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole school policies on learning support for these pupils, thus enhancing classroom based learning
- to establish early intervention programmes designed to enhance learning and to prevent/reduce difficulties in learning
- to develop, implement and review individual learning programmes, based on diagnostic tests administered to children receiving support
- to establish a team approach to the provision of support for special needs pupils. This means that the support teachers and classroom teachers, along with the principal, work together in the best interests of the child

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES of the LEARNING SUPPORT TEAM

The Learning Support Team

The principal and learning support/resource teachers work as a team supporting one another and sharing relevant information and expertise. Together they collaborate, consult and plan workloads and timetables to best implement school policy to support children with special needs in our school. The teachers meet on a weekly basis to discuss programmes of work, resources and any recent information obtained from outside agencies which relates to people with special needs. The principal attends these meetings as appropriate and as requested by the special needs teachers.

The other partners in our educational support policy are the children themselves, SNAs, parents, the Board of Management and a NEPS psychologist. Advice and support is sought from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and from external agencies from the Departments of Education and Health

The role of co-ordinator of learning support and special needs services is fulfilled in our school by the principal teacher who works closely with the Deputy Principal in this area. This co-ordination is done in consultation with the class teachers and the relevant learning support teachers.

The principal assumes overall responsibility for the school's learning support programme and for the operation of services for children with special educational needs. The principal

- maintains a list of pupils attending learning support and acquires a timetable from each supplementary teacher
- helps to co-ordinate the caseloads of learning support and resource teachers where necessary
- supports the implementation of continuous assessments at whole-school level to monitor the progress of children with learning difficulties
- advises parents on procedures for availing of special needs services
- ensures that liaison with external agencies to arrange assessments is fulfilled by the relevant teachers and that any necessary follow-up contact is made with these agencies
- arrange for classroom accommodation and resources, as appropriate
- consults with class teacher on how they can contribute to the implementation of the school plan on support
- ensures that the class teacher takes responsibility for planning and directing the appropriate learning activities for each pupil in his/her class who is in receipt of support teaching
- supports the professional development of all staff members and encourages ongoing professional development in the area of special needs, particularly for those working in this area
- facilitates parent/teacher meetings to ensure communication between class teachers, support teachers and parents of pupils in receipt of support teaching
- ensures consultation takes place between support staff and herself on a regular basis
- encourages consultation with parents and outside agencies in the learning support process
- informs parents/guardians of new-comers to the school of our selection policy for learning support

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class, including those selected for support teaching. The class teacher

- implements teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all pupils, differentiating the class curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of all pupils within the class in order to prevent the emergence of learning difficulties
- administers screening tests: Drumcondra Primary Reading Test and Sigma T on an annual basis and NRIT in September of 3rd class
- corrects all standardised tests and records results on the Aladdin Administration System
- implements teaching programmes in collaboration with the assigned support teachers
- consults and co-operates with assigned support teachers regarding priority needs, instructional activities and progress of pupils receiving school support teaching
- imparts all relevant information about a child to assigned support teacher and contributes to the drawing up of Individual and General Education Programmes
- takes responsibility for implementing differentiated learning programmes as per the staged approach outlined in Circular Sp. Ed. 02/05

- maintains regular contact with the parents of each pupil in receipt of such teaching and keeps them informed of their child's progress once support teaching is underway
- attends meetings with parents of pupils in receipt of resource hours at the start of the school year and during Seachtain na Gaeilge
- completes - in conjunction and in consultation with support teachers and principal - referral forms of pupils selected for psychological assessment

The learning support teacher provides support for children with learning difficulties, children diagnosed with specific needs and children with resource hours. The learning support teacher

- carries out and interprets diagnostic assessments on all pupils selected for School Support and School Support Plus
- develops - in consultation with class teacher and parents - a General Education Programme for each pupil receiving learning support in English and/or Maths
- develops - in consultation with class teacher and parents - an Individual Education Programme for each pupil granted resource hours arising out of an assessed syndrome
- maintains a weekly planning and progress record for each individual or group of pupils
- maintains an attendance record for each individual attending support classes
- contributes to the development of policy on learning support at the whole school level
- provides assistance to class teachers by assisting in the interpretation of psychological reports and recommendations
- contributes at school level to decision making regarding the purchase of learning resources, books and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms, in the school library and in the learning support teacher's room
- reviews pupil progress at the end of each of two 15 week terms with a view to regrouping pupils
- maintains and reviews pupil records
- consults on a regular basis with teachers and parents
- arranges, in conjunction and in consultation with class teachers and principal for any necessary psychological assessments of pupils in the support category
- makes any necessary contact with speech therapist and/or psychologist regarding pupils in support programme
- assists class teachers in regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, suitable textbooks, use of IT and suitable software and range of other related matters
- meets, consults with and advises parents, accompanied by the class teacher and principal, when necessary, but in particular when meeting parents of new children who are allocated resource hours
- meets with relevant professionals, e.g. psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists etc. and informs class teacher of outcome

The **special needs assistant** is recruited to assist a child or children with disabilities in an educational context and to assist the teacher in the classroom with organisational issues. The duties of the SNA are of a non-teaching nature and will include any special assistance the child may require. (cf: SNA job description). The Special Needs Assistant is an invaluable resource in supporting the child with special needs, in progressing tasks outlined by the learning support teacher in consultation with the class teacher and in encouraging a level of independence in the special needs child.

PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, IDENTIFICATION & SELECTION

Prevention or at least alleviation of learning difficulties can be achieved by implementing appropriate whole-school strategies in English and Maths, where we

- observe and assess pupil progress on an ongoing structured basis
- provide additional support to pupils who need it
- implement parent and SNA involvement programmes, e.g. Paired Reading, Toe by Toe

Early intervention is central to our selection process with priority given to children in 3rd and 4th class.

A teacher who feels that any other child in his/her class is in need of learning support should start by drawing up a differentiated learning plan for each child using the Staged Approach and the Continuum of Support documents, while liaising with the principal. (See attached)

This staged approach (template and data available) should be implemented for a full school term. If - after this time - the child is still struggling s/he may be selected for learning support, when a place becomes available.

Children who join the school mid-year can only be accommodated in learning support if they meet the criteria laid out below and a place is available. In the meantime, the teacher will implement the staged approach where necessary.

Identification of pupils in need of learning support and/or assessment by school psychologist is based on the following criteria

- teacher observation
- results of standardised tests administered on an annual basis
- results of diagnostic tests administered by the support teachers
- psychological or other relevant reports
- consultation with parents, support teachers , class teacher, principal

Based on these considerations, a teacher is required to fill out a Teacher Appraisal Form which is sent to all class teachers in March each year. These documents are then returned to the principal who will discuss them with the Learning Support Team. (see Template)

The Support Team will include this child in the March Diagnostic Testing and decide, in consultation with parents, class teacher and principal, whether the child is in need of support for either English or Maths.

Selection of pupils for learning support is based on the following criteria:

- children who fall below the 12th percentile in standardised tests in literacy (DPRT) and numeracy (SigmaT)
- children who score between the 12th - 15th percentile in standardised tests provided resources are available - these children will receive support in order of need
- children with allocated resource hours and/or SNA support
- children who are deemed to be in need of support for emotional, social or behavioural reasons that effect their performance in mainstream class
- children who require support in English as an additional language, who are struggling to keep up with the daily work in the classroom
- children for whom there is a significant discrepancy (20+ percentile points) between vocabulary and comprehension scores in standardised tests
- children who present with specific problems in literacy/numeracy following March review and consultation with class teacher

Taking the above criteria into consideration, the final decision for selection of pupils rests with the principal.

The Staged Approach to Assessment, Identification and Programme Planning

In St. Attracta's Senior School, we follow the Staged Approach suggested by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). This is better known in our school as the **Continuum of Support**.

CONTINUUM of SUPPORT

The needs of pupils with special educational needs can best be considered in terms of a continuum and therefore support given is also on the basis of a continuum. The focus is on identifying actions which can be taken to make a positive difference to the pupil/s. These actions are identified using a problem solving approach. An incrementally more systematic process is outlined depending on where the pupil's needs lie on the continuum in terms of intensity and duration. There are three stages in the Continuum of Support:

Stage 1: CLASSROOM SUPPORT

Classroom Support is the most common, and typically the first response to emerging needs. It is a response for pupils who have distinct or individual educational needs and who require approaches to learning and/or behaviour which are additional to or different from those required by other pupils in their class. Problem solving at this level typically begins when a parent or teacher has concerns about an individual pupil. The teacher and parents discuss the nature of the problem and consider strategies which may be effective. **Classroom Support incorporates the simple, informal problem-solving approaches commonly used by class teachers to support emerging needs.**

Stage 2: SCHOOL SUPPORT

In some cases interventions at classroom support level are not enough to fully meet the pupil's special educational needs. School Support may, therefore, be required. **The class teacher needs to involve the learning support/resource teachers in the problem-solving process at this point** and it involves more systematic gathering of information and the development and monitoring of a School Support Plan or an Individual Pupil Learning Profile (IPLP).

Stage 3: SCHOOL SUPPORT PLUS

If a pupil's special educational needs are severe and/or persistent, they are likely to need intensive support. **School Support Plus will generally involve personnel outside the school team in the problem solving, assessment and intervention process.** It is at this point that the school psychologist will normally be contacted. However, the information from Classroom and School Support work will provide the starting point for problem-solving at this level. Classroom support and school support will continue to be an important element of his/her individual education plan (IEP)

ORGANISATION & TIMETABLING of LEARNING SUPPORT

Learning support/resource teaching is provided for pupils from 3rd - 6th class as follows:

1. **Learning support on a withdrawal basis:** This usually involves small group tuition. In order to maximise the benefit to the children, learning support groups should be kept to a minimum, usually no more than four pupils. One to one tuition on a withdrawal basis may also be provided for selected resource pupils only.
2. **In-class support:** This is also an effective way of providing support. The support teacher comes into the classroom and works in direct partnership with the class teacher. The support teacher and class teacher may opt for this method at the beginning of the year and choose to change it as the need arises.
3. Children may also be supported during **Literacy Hour** and during **Station Teaching** in Maths which takes place 3 days a week.
4. For pupils with resource hours teaching can take many forms including buddy reading, peer mentoring etc.

Children - especially third class pupils - need a two-week settling in period with their new teacher before commencing learning support. During this period the support teachers set up timetables, organise programmes and equipment, test new pupils to the school (who have not come from the Junior School) and meet with parents and teachers before formal classes begin.

Each Support Team Member is given an allocation of pupils for whom they prepare IEPs each year. They are responsible for these specific children, and by writing up the IEP, they ensure that the child receives suitable support with - at least - their allocated hours accounted for. A child with resource hours might often work with more than one support teacher.

Timetabling

The principal oversees timetabling in the school, and learning support, language support and resource hours are allocated on a needs basis. Timetabling for the support team will be given priority in the school and all other timetables will revolve around this.

Once finalised, timetables are given to the class teacher, who will ensure that their learning support pupils and the Special Needs Assistant have copies of same. The timetable will be reviewed for each instructional term.

Every effort is made by teachers to ensure that arts and crafts, PE and swimming, computers, curriculum room and library time will not be infringed upon in order to avoid negative associations with learning support/special needs. Every effort is made to avoid students missing out on the *same* curricular area each time they receive supplementary teaching.

Such flexibility in timetabling involves the classroom teacher and the learning support teacher taking into account the needs of their pupils. Flexibility is also required in order to ensure integration and inclusion of all pupils in school life and activities, such as school and class assemblies, Book Week, Seachtain na Gaeilge, etc.

There are two instructional periods for learning support, from mid-September to March and from March to mid-June. The three critical periods in the provision of learning support are September, March and June.

CALENDAR for LEARNING SUPPORT

SEPTEMBER: PLANNING and TIMETABLING

Week 1:

- Organize resources, fine-tune timetables, look at further allocation (new pupils)
- Liaise with Principal regarding priority listing for NEPS Psychologist

Week 2:

- Parent/Teacher meetings
- Consultation time between class teachers and support teachers
- Diagnostic testing of all new pupils, especially those without adequate information.
- Children who received support in JNS are automatically on the SNS list.

Week 3

- Start of first 15 week term: formal learning support classes begin.
- Work on IEPs and IPLPs is ongoing

NOVEMBER

- Parent Teacher meetings, as per school calendar

FEBRUARY

- Handover of information on resource pupils from Junior to Senior School

MARCH

- First learning support term finishes before Seachtain na Gaeilge
- Diagnostic and individual testing of learning support children using a range of tests
- Review of all children on the Continuum of Support, with diagnostic testing if necessary.
- Class Teacher/Learning Support Teacher meetings
- Teacher Appraisal Forms to be given out by principal to class teachers
- Decisions to be made if a child can be dismissed or included in support classes
- Second instructional term begins after Seachtain na Gaeilge

APRIL

- Standardised Testing in Classes as per Spring norms - Drumcondra Reading Test
- Testing to be administered mornings only

MAY

- Standardised Testing in Classes as per Summer Norms - Sigma Maths Test
- Testing to be administered mornings only
- Liaison with Junior School - verbal hand-over of information at end of May

JUNE:

- Pre-planning and timetabling for next school year starts in the last two weeks of June
- Parent/Teacher meetings for Learning Support Teachers
- Review of all children for whom the Continuum of Support has been implemented.
- Teacher Appraisal Forms to be given out by principal to class teachers
- No formal Learning Support Classes take place in the last two weeks of June to facilitate
 - i. Updating of files
 - ii. Work on IEPs and IPLPs
 - iii. Documented sign-off of written information filed on all children
 - iv. Handover of information from current LS Teachers to new LS Teachers
 - v. Meetings between current class teacher and next year's LS teacher
 - vi. Allocation of children to Learning Support Teachers
 - vii. Organisation of groups for next school year

PLANNING for LEARNING SUPPORT

Planning forms an integral part of our learning support policy. In St. Attracta's Senior School, our planning is based on two instructional terms: September to March and March to June.

Typically, every Learning Support Teacher's folder should include the following:

- Child Protection Policy
- Dignity in the Workplace Charter
- Learning Support Policy and Plan
- List of children with allocated resource hours
- List of pupils attending learning support
- A weekly timetable*
- Long term plans
- Short term plans
- IEPs (with recommendations from Psychological reports)
- IPLPs
- Assessment Folder/Pupil Profiles
- Cuntas Míósúil

*The weekly timetable for pupils receiving resource support should indicate the amount of time allocated to each pupil / group of pupils with special educational needs, the curricular area/s being taught and the context in which teaching occurs.

Each Support Teacher will have a scheme of work for each child or group of children. This can take the format of a 'scheme of work' or IPLP, depending on whether the child is receiving in-class support, withdrawal or a combination of both. Copies of these documents are available to the Class Teacher and Principal, and filed in the individual child's file in Room 5.

In addition to this, each Support Teacher plans on paper for the week ahead and writes an account either daily or weekly on the progress made by each child. This documentation is stored in the child's personal file in the Support Teacher's room.

Every child attending learning support has one of the following constructed within each teacher's overall plan of work for the year, i.e. Scéim Bliana. (See templates):

- An Individual Educational Programme (IEP) for individual children with hours
- An Individual Pupil Learning Programme (IPLP) for children in groups

Both documents are prepared by a teacher on the Learning Support Team, in consultation with parents, teachers and other professionals working with a child.

IEPs are drawn up using information given by Class Teacher, Parents and the Child themselves (see templates). All IEPs must be signed by Principal, Parents and Class Teacher and be finished by the end of October every year. Copies of the finished documents are given to the Class Teacher, Principal and a copy is kept on file in Room LS3.

Individual Profile and Learning Programme (IPLP)

Individual Profile and Learning Programmes (IPLPs) are formulated in September for children receiving learning support in English and/or maths. These children are allocated hours under the General Allocation Model (high incidence pupils). This plan is reviewed in March each year.

IPLP's are prepared by the support teacher in consultation with the class teacher. The IPLP then becomes part of the support teacher's own scéim bliana. When complete, a copy of the IPLP will be given to the class teacher and to the principal, who will sign off on the original document. A copy of the IPLP is also put into each child's file which is kept in a locked cabinet in the Learning Support room.

Individual Education Plans

An **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** is formulated in September for each child with allocated resource hours and/or a Special Needs Assistant (low incidence pupils). This is a working document which is passed on and updated each year. It outlines the child's abilities, skills and talents along with his/her special educational needs and background. It culminates with a set of specific targets to be achieved by the child by year end.

IEP's are prepared by the support teacher and the class teacher, with input from the Special Needs Assistant, the parents of the child and the child him/herself. (See Consultation Forms)

When complete, a copy of the IEP is given to the class teacher and the principal, who will sign off on the original document. The class teacher, the support teacher and the SNA assigned to the child will meet regularly to discuss targets set down in the plan and to monitor the progress being made.

Formal meetings involving parents and teachers take place in September, in November, in March and in June to assess, evaluate and plan the first and second instructional term's work for each child.

The importance of planning and recording for special needs pupils cannot be underestimated. In St. Attracta's Senior School, 1.5 hours per week is set aside for planning and liaison with teachers, parents and pupils.

Learning Support/Special Needs Programmes

The Learning Support Programme for each school year applies to:

- Pupils who qualify for Learning Support in English and/or Maths as per school policy.
- Pupils with a diagnosis of a specific Special Need as approved by the SENO (Special Educational Needs Officer) and as sanctioned by the Department of Education & Science.

Planning templates and master copies of letters to parents are attached to this document and are available on the Aladdin system under 'Documents'

Programmes used for learning support and supplementary teaching are attached to this document.

Resources for Learning Support

A wide range of resources is available to the learning support team. (See Learning Support Programme). This inventory is updated in June each year. These resources are kept in the support rooms and are shared by the support team. Personal resources paid for by individual support teachers are the property of that teacher and should be labelled as such. All other resources are school property and may be used by any member of the support team.

A library of reference books is available in the school staff room and the principal's office to update teachers on current developments in the area of special needs. It is recommended that teachers who require information on a specific area of learning support/special needs source and purchase the relevant material and be reimbursed by the principal.

ASSESSMENT & REPORTING

As stated in the Primary School Curriculum (DES, 1999) assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. In St. Attracta's Senior School, we recognise the importance of assessment in making learning more enjoyable, more motivating and overall a more positive experience for both the children and teachers. It enables teachers, pupils and parents to monitor learning outcomes and identify learning needs. Informal tests, individual teacher-designed class tests and teacher observations are regularly carried out in class. This enables the class teacher to monitor educational progress in relation to the child's own development and that of his/her peers.

All teachers use Assessment of Learning and Assessment for Learning strategies in their class.

Assessment of Learning (AoL)

Standardised tests are administered to all pupils in all classes in April/May each year.

Results of standardised tests are reported to parents of all pupils in written form at the end of each school year. Where there is an issue requiring discussion, teachers will arrange to meet parents.

Class teachers administer, correct and score the following standardised tests:

3 rd - 6 th class:	Schonell Spelling Test	September
3 rd class:	Young Group Maths test	September
5 th class:	NRIT	September
3 rd - 6 th class:	Drumcondra Primary Reading	April
3 rd - 6 th class:	Sigma T Maths Test	May

The learning support teacher administers the NRIT test to children who enrol mid-year and standardised test results, as well as school reports are requested from their previous school.

Testing may take place on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday (mornings only). All test results are recorded on the Aladdin system and are available to the learning support team.

Children who receive Learning Support and who are not present on testing day will be tested by a Learning Support teacher as their progress in particular needs to be monitored, although it is acknowledged that their results will then not be standardised. However it gives an indication of the child's level.

Parents are notified once teachers feel there is a notable change in their child's academic progress or attitude. When a child is finished in learning support parents are notified in writing. Parents are also informed of their child's standardised tests results.

Permission for testing and for inclusion in learning support is sought from parents at the start of the school year. Parents are made aware of the results of the tests and are invited to have an input in planning a programme for their child.

Standardised testing takes place in the third term and results are conveyed to parents in June.

Assessment for Learning (AfL)

Diagnostic testing is carried out in March (**after the first instructional term**) by the support teachers using a selection of the tests listed below. Parental permission is sought in writing before testing takes place.

- Neale Analysis of Reading / Diagnostic Reading Analysis
- Jackson Get Reading Right
- Cloze Tests.
- Early Literacy Test
- Aston Index (parts of)
- Schonnel Reading and Spelling Test
- Lucid Cops

Following these diagnostic tests, the support teacher conveys the results to the class teacher and on this basis they discuss the possibility of individual children being discharged from Learning Support, thus allowing other children to join the class. Parents are notified in writing when a child is being discharged from or accepted into learning support class.

See our school policy on Assessment for an elaboration of AoL and AfL strategies.

Storage & Archiving of Assessment Records

Psychological assessments and reports are securely kept in the principal's office, along with applications to the NCSE for resource hours and SNA support.

Every child attending learning support has a file in a locked filing cabinet in Learning Support Room #3, which contains copies of their psychological assessments and reports. The children's files also contain other professional reports, an IEP or an IPLP and results of various diagnostic and other tests conducted over the years.

These files are available for class teachers to read, but should not be taken out of the room for security purposes. Copies are given to the assigned support teachers and are read by the class teacher who signs off on them.

In the interests of pupil confidentiality, test results, psychological assessments and progress reports are made available only to the teachers working with the child, the parents of the child and the principal of the school.

When children leave in sixth class, the support teacher(s) remove their files from the cabinet and retain keep the child's IEP/IPLP and all psychological assessments. These files are stored under the calendar year in which these children leave the school. They are retained in school for ten years. All other documentation pertaining to particular children is shredded.

Test results - including cover page where appropriate - are kept until the child is 21 years of age/ for 10 years after the child leaves the school. Scripts may be kept for one year for AFL purposes. All documents are finally disposed of by shredding.

REVIEW OF PROGRESS

Review of Progress

The review of each pupil's progress at the end of each instructional term will assess the learning targets achieved in their IEP or GEP. Evaluating the progress made will determine the level of continued learning support provided. This decision will also be informed by the class teacher's observations on the pupil's progress in class and by parents' observations about progress and behaviour. Outcomes of targets in the IEP/GEP are the main focus. If supplementary teaching is to be continued, previous targets may be extended or new targets established. The type of continued support would also consider whether in-class support or withdrawal is the most suitable intervention.

Discontinuation of Learning Support

A child is deemed to be ready for release from learning support when

- s/he has made significant progress in learning support (e.g. exceeded the 25th percentile)
- s/he has attained a level of competence to be able to work independently at class level
- s/he has the confidence to be integrated into the classroom environment

At this stage the child's parents will be notified in writing of the school's decision. On return to class the teacher will carefully monitor the child's work and keep the learning support teacher advised of his/her progress. The principal, class teacher and support teachers in consultation with parents will, to the best of their ability provide the most suitable support for each child.

COMMUNICATIONS

In St. Attracta's Senior School, we recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children and that liaison with parents in relation to their child's education is essential. When a child with special educational needs first enrolls in the school, the principal and the learning support co-ordinator meet with the parents, prior to their commencement in the school. At this stage, the child's specific needs are discussed and the parents' valued input is sought.

In the case of children who attend learning support, the class teacher and the learning support teacher meet with parents in September and March to discuss the child's progress and to plan and assess the child's educational programme.

Where a child with special educational needs has resource hours and/or an SNA allocated to them, the principal will also attend formal meetings, which take place in September and March.

Formal parent/teacher meetings take place in the first term each year, during which the class teacher meets with parents to discuss their child's overall progress and development.

Informal meetings with parents will also happen quite often during a school year, as the need arises. It is imperative that the class teacher is informed of all communications with the parents of learning support and special needs pupils.

Parents are advised of ways in which they can help their child at home and they are invited to become involved in programmes such as paired reading and Toe by Toe. Parents are notified once teachers feel there is a notable change in their child's academic progress or attitude. When a child is finished in learning support parents are notified in writing.

Strategies for Communicating Information:

Communication with all parties involved in the child's education is imperative:

- The learning support team meet regularly with the principal to discuss the whole area of special education and its needs.
- Formal meetings with parents take place regularly. Other meetings with parents take place on a regular basis as the need arises.
- The class teacher and the learning support teacher meet formally in September and March to discuss progress and to plan and assess the child's educational programme.

- Informal meetings between class teachers and support teachers take place on a regular basis, usually between 10.45 - 11.00a.m. More formal meetings involving class teachers and learning support teachers take place on a bimonthly basis.
- The principals of St. Attracta's Senior & Junior Schools meet in the second term to discuss the transfer of pupils from the junior to the senior school. Once children are registered in the senior school, a formal letter requesting copies of school reports, standardised test results, psychological assessments and relevant reports is sent to the principal of the junior school. (following parental consent).
- The principal in the Senior School then meets with parents of children from the Junior School who have resource hours and/or assistance from a special needs assistant, with a view to re-applying to the NCSE for continued support in the Senior School. These meetings take place in January/February each year.
- Principals of both schools facilitate meetings between third class teachers and the previous second-class teachers in order to transfer general information about incoming classes and to identify specific needs within a class.
- The Learning Support teachers meet with the Junior School Learning Support teachers in June each year, in order to identify those children who may need support and to allow planning time prior to September.
- Structures are then set up for information to be passed on to all those who will be involved in the child's educational provision.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

ENROLMENT of CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

St. Attracta's Senior School is academically non-selective and welcomes children of any and all abilities, including those with special needs and the exceptionally able. It seeks to provide for the needs of each individual child, accepting that children with special educational needs learn at a different pace and in a different way from other children. They need to belong to a peer group and to mix with children of different abilities in a variety of situations. Children will be catered for in the mainstream classroom but may be withdrawn in small groups for additional support. Before children join St. Attracta's from another school, school records and up to date standardised test results are sought from their previous school.

Prior to the child's enrolment, the school will acquaint themselves with a child's special needs and whether these are categorised as High Incidence or Low Incidence. This may be done by

- Meeting between parents/ principal/class teacher/special needs staff and SENO, as appropriate
- Obtaining copies/details of reports, assessments etc. from SENO, parents, ...
- Contact with Special Educational Needs Organiser, NEPS Psychologist or other psychologist/speech therapist/ occupational therapist/other agency

Other steps which are taken to ensure a smooth transition into the school the pupil include

- Parental visits to school
- Pupil visits to school
- Staff visits to special schools/special units
- Making all school employees and pupils aware of the need for inclusion (EPSEN Act)
- Liaison with SENO to arrange for additional personnel, resources, training
- Establishment of a 'Buddy system' between new and existing pupils

When there are health and safety issues arising from the child's mobility and care needs, these can be identified and strategies developed to address them? e.g. access, toilets, supervision, administration of medicine, intimate care, course for SNAs etc.

TRANSFER TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

While consultation takes place between our school and the second-level schools in the area, when a child is transferring into secondary school, it is the parents' responsibility to inform the school authorities of their child's special educational needs and to furnish them with all relevant information about their child, including psychological reports, when available.

St. Attracta's Senior School will make every effort to facilitate the transition from primary to secondary school and when requested, will pass on standardised test results as agreed to on our school's registration form. We will adopt the Education Passport with effect from June 2014. We feel it is important to give relevant information, but allow the secondary school to form their own views of a pupil, as some pupils perform differently in new circumstances.

LINKS WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES

The principal and/or school co-ordinator liaises with all external agencies, particularly NEPS (National Educational Psychological Services) and the SENO (Special Educational Needs Officer). Each year, class teachers are asked to identify concerns in relation to pupils who have reached Stage 3 of the Staged Approach. A list of priority pupils for assessment by NEPS is then drawn up by the principal, in consultation with the learning support and class teachers.

The class teacher will oversee initial contact with parents. The Learning Support Teacher and/or the Resource Teacher will liaise with assessment services and, where appropriate, make arrangements for additional educational provision for children with diagnosed special needs. Class teachers and learning support teachers are invited to be in attendance at meetings when appropriate.

Support and advice is available through the SESS (Special Educational Support Services) and the PPDS (Primary Professional Development Services), as well as through colleagues who have developed an expertise in particular areas of special need.

Social welfare services are available through the H.S.E., while speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, etc. are available through the Lucena Clinic, by appointment.

When a specialist comes to the school to speak about a particular child, as many members as possible of the learning support team should be in attendance in order to avail of their expertise. as part of the professional development of the LS teacher.

DEPLOYMENT OF TEACHERS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The principal is responsible for the deployment of teachers, including the support team and this is done on an annual basis due to changes of personnel and resources.

Teachers who are interested in taking on the position of learning support/special needs resource teacher should indicate this preference when classes are being allocated each year. The position of learning support teacher usually follows a 5 year cycle in order to allow teachers the opportunity to vary between class teaching and support teaching.

The learning support/special needs teacher is not expected to provide teaching cover for colleagues who may be absent except in exceptional circumstances where there may be regular disruption of the learning support/special needs teacher's timetable in a given week, e.g. preparation for Confirmation, Book Week, Christmas carols, etc.

The staff are supported in availing of professional development in the area of special needs, by facilitation of release time and substitute cover where possible and by encouragement of teachers to pursue the Special Needs diploma in St. Patrick's College or the Church of Ireland, summer courses, contact with the PPDS, courses in Blackrock Education Centre, and by provision of books, articles and literature made available in the school. If a teacher attends a professional course relevant to special needs and learning support, it is recommended that they transfer information and knowledge to other teachers.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy on learning support and special needs was first developed in April 2003. It was reviewed and updated in the light of changes in Special Education and Department of Education guidelines and circulars. The policy is available to all parents and partners in education.

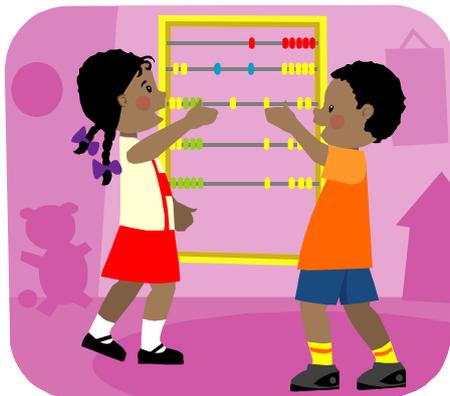
All members of the teaching staff (principal teacher, class teachers, learning support/resource teachers) along with parents, pupils and the Board of Management have been involved in the preparation of this policy.

This policy on Learning Support has been made available to school personnel and published on the school website. The views and opinions of the partners in education are welcome at all times.

St. Attracta's Senior School

Meadowbrook

Áth Cliath 16



**Learning Support
Programme/Resources**



PROGRAMMES/RESOURCES

Area 1: Phonic and Word Attack Skills, Sight Vocabulary

A Lexia Computer Programme:

Level 1 uses games and sight vocabulary to target:

- Short vowel sounds
- Consonant blends (e.g. sn, sk, dr)
- Letter confusion/reversals: b p d q
- Middle vowels
- Short vowel words

Level 2 and 3 target:

- 2-3 syllable words
- Sentences and paragraphs, cloze activities
- Vowel digraphs (e.g. aw, ai, oa)
- Suffixes

B Sight Vocabulary lists:

- Dorn, Dolch vocabulary lists

C 500 Word Code Book:

- Independent activity
- Focus on alphabetical order to develop dictionary skills
- Short activities ideal for focusing on joined writing and penmanship skills

D PAT Programme:

- Phonological awareness programme using onset and rime.
- Helps spelling through a focus on pattern recognition.
- Dictation exercises help transfer reading and spelling knowledge to all written activities.

E Stile trays:

- Phonics, Dyslexia, Spelling, Comprehension Stile trays
- Independent activities to improve phonic skills, patterns, reversals, confusions

F Games:

- Swap card game - focus on consonant blends and digraphs (ph, gh) and vowel digraphs
- Smart Chute game: Triple consonant clusters, final consonant clusters, blend endings, long vowel phonemes, split digraphs, grammar sentences, singular and plural, medial vowel sounds, vowel phonemes, irregular nouns, idiom
- Chunks (building words)

G Written Phonic Work

- *Sounds, Patterns and Words* booklets by Collins Educational

Area 2: Language: Improving the understanding and use of language

Resources:

1. *Oral Comprehension* by Prim-Ed
2. *Listening Comprehension* by Prim-Ed
3. *Processing Auditory Messages* by DeGaetano
4. *Auditory Processing Activities and Practical Language Activities* by ECL
5. *Black Sheep Press Publications*: idioms, homonyms, speech
6. *Sequencing Stories Book 2* by Easylearn
7. Files obtained from Ballinteer Health Centre
8. Clinical Language Intervention Program (CLIP)
9. *Spelling and Language Board Games* by SmartKids

Area 3: Spelling

1. McKay spelling activities focusing on recall and memory
2. *A Hand for Spelling* by Cripps
3. Newell Literacy Programme
4. Wordshark
5. *Spelling Pattern* and *Spelling Card* programme by Cambridge Educational
6. *Sound Sense* programme by A.E. Tansley
7. *Master your Spelling* by GC Davies, S.M. Dillon and T.D. Dillon
8. Educational games: 6 Spelling Board Games
Brendan Culligan

Area 4: Reading and Comprehension Skills

1. Reading Schemes including Oxford Reading Tree Books, GINN 360
 - i. Improving motivation and confidence by listening daily to reading
 - ii. Developing speed and fluency
 - iii. Used as a resource to improve comprehension skills (prediction, cause and effect, explaining, drawing conclusions, summarising)
 - iv. Sight vocabulary and phonological awareness
2. *Reading and Thinking* programme by Arthur J. Evans
3. *Looking and Thinking* programme by Arthur J. Evans
4. Stile Comprehension
5. RIC Publications Comprehension Cards
6. *Between the Lines* programme (Following the steps: recall, reflect, reinforce, react)
7. *Clash* by Ticktock publishing company (excellent reading material suitable for 6th class pupils)
8. Carroll comprehension and skills series (*Ghosts Secrets & Thieves*, etc.)

Area 5: Maths

The same textbook as the mainstream class may be used or a different one with a differentiated approach depending on the ability of the pupils (in class and/or withdrawal).

The Florence Gavin Maths programme (Maths Together) is used for children who need an individualised maths program and who are not able to work at the present standard of their class. This program is used only by the Learning Support team when the children are withdrawn either individually or in a small group.

Hands-on equipment and resources are used in maths particularly for the following areas: money, multiplication, division, time and data.

Tables:

1. Florence Gavin Multiplication and Division tables books
2. www.mathsisfun.com
3. *Master Your Tables* by Blackwell's
4. *Table Toppers* by CJ Fallon
5. *The Tables Book* by Stanley Thornes Primary Maths
6. *Step into Tables* by Prim-Ed
7. Smart Chute game: Multiplication tables

Area 6: Social Skills

1. *The Me Book* (book to develop self-awareness)
2. *Talkabout* by Alex Kelly
3. *Social Skills for Special Children* by Darlene Mannix
4. *Self-awareness* by Frank Smith
5. *Dealing with Feelings* by Tina Rae
6. *Self-esteem, Skills to Build Self-Worth* by Prim-Ed
7. *Socially Speaking* by Alison Schroeder
8. *Cool Kids Teaching and Learning About Managing Anger in the Junior School* by Paula Galey

Games:

- Socially Speaking
- Speaking & Listening (6 games)
- Social skills (6 games)

Area 7: Writing

- Scholastic Writing Guides

Area 8: Developmental Co-Ordination Disorder (DCD) - Dyspraxia

1. Learning Breakthrough DCD programme - 2 DVDs and book, balance board, pendulum ball, beanbags, visual motor control stick
2. An individualised OT programme created by the occupational therapist in Lucena
3. Threading boards, Sewing skills, Cutting and pasting (for fine motor skills)
4. Gym balls (for gross motor skills)
5. Typing skills (Mavis Beacon)
6. Sequencing, memory and writing activities

St. Attracta's Senior School
Meadowbrook
Áth Cliath 16



Learning Support Templates
& Communications with Parents



Scoil Shinsireach Naomh Athracht

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Cláracha Ama srl.

Timetables & Allocations



WHAT IS THE CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT?

Stage 1: CLASSROOM SUPPORT

Classroom Support is the most common, and typically the first response to emerging needs. It is a response for pupils who have distinct or individual educational needs and who require approaches to learning and/or behaviour which are additional to or different from those required by other pupils in their class. Problem solving at this level typically begins when a parent or teacher has concerns about an individual pupil. The teacher and parents discuss the nature of the problem and consider strategies which may be effective. **Classroom Support incorporates the simple, informal problem-solving approaches commonly used by class teachers to support emerging needs.**

Stage 2: SCHOOL SUPPORT

In some cases interventions at classroom support level are not enough to fully meet the pupil's special educational needs. School Support may, therefore, be required. **The class teacher needs to involve the learning support/resource teachers in the problem-solving process at this point** and it involves more systematic gathering of information and the development and monitoring of a School Support Plan or an Individual Pupil Learning Profile (IPLP).

Stage 3: SCHOOL SUPPORT PLUS

If a pupil's special educational needs are severe and/or persistent, they are likely to need intensive support. **School Support Plus will generally involve personnel outside the school team in the problem solving, assessment and intervention process.** It is at this point that the school psychologist will normally be contacted. However, the information from Classroom and School Support work will provide the starting point for problem-solving at this level. Classroom support and school support will continue to be an important element of his/her individual education plan (IEP).