

Special Educational Needs Policy - A Whole School Approach

**SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
POLICY**

A Whole School Approach

**Seamount College
SEN Department
Amended 2017/18**

SEAMOUNT COLLEGE

This policy applies to all students with SEN, who attend Seamount College, Kinvara. It is also intended to serve the school community including the Board of Management, the Principal, the teaching and ancillary staff and parents.

Introduction and Scope of this Policy:

This document sets out the policy of Seamount College in respect of students who have special educational needs. The Education Act 1998 defines the term 'special educational needs' as 'the educational needs of students who have a disability and the educational needs of exceptionally able students'. The Education Act 1998 also defines the word 'disability' and its meaning in this policy is the same as defined in that Act. The policy applies to students who are exceptional; gifted students, student with learning difficulties, students with disabilities and students who are at risk - personal, emotional, social or educational; in short pupils who may need additional help or support to enable them to derive the maximum benefit from school.

Relationship to school's Mission Statement

Our aim is to provide with the support of parents, a holistic, Christian education in a caring and respectful environment where teaching and learning lead to the development of the full potential of each individual in the school community. We believe that character formation is fundamental in preparing young people for life. It is our hope that students will leave us adequately prepared for life with a healthy self-image and ability to adapt in a rapidly changing world.

Seamount College welcomes students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and recognises "the need to provide that the education of people with such needs shall wherever possible take place in an inclusive environment"⁴It aims to ensure that these students are encouraged to participate in school life as far as is reasonably practicable and that no student is bullied or singled out for unfair treatment as a consequence of their disability.

This policy is informed by the school's Mission Statement which commits us to preparing all students for the challenges of adolescent and adult life and to respecting the dignity, worth and individuality of every member of the school community.

Rationale:

This policy aims to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to enable the school

- to make an accurate and appropriate assessment of the needs of students who may have special educational needs,
- to assess the school's capacity to cater for the needs identified and
- to specify what additional resources may be required by the student and / or the school and
- to provide for the needs identified, in as far as resources allocated to the school permit.

Legal Framework

Seamount College sets out to provide education for all its students, with reference to legislation regarding students with SEN as listed below:

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Education Welfare Act (2000)
- The Equal Status Act (2000)
- The Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill (2003)
- The Equality Act (2004)
- The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)
- The Freedom of Education Acts (1997 and 2003)
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)

This policy is drafted in the context of:

- DES Circular Letters
- The guidelines published by the NCSE
- The guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process 2006
- The Guidelines on the Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools (NEPS).
- The guidelines published by the Special Educational Needs Support Service (SESS)

AIMS OF THE POLICY

The principal aim of Learning Support in Seamount College is to provide a positive learning environment, which will foster the academic, social and emotional development of students with learning difficulties and to enable each to realise their individual potential.

Learning Support provision also seeks to:

- Enable pupils of all abilities to avail of and benefit from an appropriate education.
- Provide students with consistent opportunities to experience success.
- Provide supplementary teaching and additional support in literacy and numeracy.
- Involve parents in the support of their daughter's education.
- Promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of a whole school policy on learning support for pupils.
- Protect and enhance the self-esteem of the learner.

The school hopes to achieve the following by updating the SEN policy:

- To include the most recent best practice in SEN.
- To reflect the most recent recommendations, most particularly the Continuum of Support at Post-Primary Schools (NEPS).
- To outline our whole school approach to teaching/ learning in relation to pupils with SEN.
- To set out procedures for the enrolment of students with SEN in the school.
- To assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child in our school.
- Ensure that students with SEN are educated in an inclusive environment.
- Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the specific needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.
- Ensure that SEN is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.
- Ensure that students with SEN are offered a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Set high standards for students with SEN and provide them with appropriate guidance, encouraging them to achieve to their full potential.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with SEN.
- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at home and at home.
- To outline procedures and practices which will be followed in relation to supporting the learning of pupils with SEN.
- To establish communication structures for the involvement of all the partners in the education of pupils with SEN. (Learning Support Guidelines)

Inclusion

For the purposes of this document, the following definition by the NCSE, has been adopted.

Inclusion is defined as a process of:

□ addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners through enabling participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and

□ removing barriers to education through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements, to enable each learner to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her attendance at school.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS IN THE SEN TEAM

The SEN team comprises the Principal, Deputy Principal, the SEN Co-ordinator, the Learning Support and Resource teachers, the Guidance Counsellor and the mainstream teachers. The team also includes any SNA's, as approved by the DES. The SEN Co-ordinator is also part of the Pastoral Care team in the school and works closely with this student support team and with Year Heads.

The team is advised by the SENO and NEPS psychologist as well as other agencies and professionals involved with SEN students in the school. The specific roles and responsibilities of personnel are as described in the DES Inspectorate publication, *Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools, Post-primary Guidelines* (2017).

Role of Board of Management

- To ensure that a policy is in place and that it is reviewed.
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.
- To ensure that adequate resources are sought and provided, well maintained and used well.
- To provide for appropriate Staff Development.
- To decide on appeals by parents / guardians with respect to decisions made by the principal.

Role of Principal/ Deputy Principal

- To inform the Board of Management of issues, with SEN.
- To consult with the SEN Co-ordinator and other personnel who liaise with the Department of Education regarding needs and provisions.
- To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources, including the allocation of resource hours and funds.
- To establish a "Special Needs Support Team" in the school to ensure identification of needs and support for students with SEN.

- To promote a whole school approach to special educational needs, make all staff aware of their responsibilities in this area and to facilitate appropriate staff development in this area.
- To promote the development of positive partnerships with parents of SEN students.
- To ensure that procedures exist for consultation with primary schools with regard to the enrolment of students with SEN.
- To process applications for Irish Exemptions.
- To provide leadership in developing relevant whole school policies: enrolment/ assessment/ inclusion.
- To manage the implementation of policies and practices
- To provide strategic support for evidence based interventions
- To assign roles and responsibilities
- To keep records of those receiving support and of the level of support provided.
- To ensure compliance with statutory requirements when EPSEN* is implemented.
- To direct the work of the SNA's

Role of SEN Co-ordinator

- To co-ordinate/ devise a school SEN Plan.
- To create and maintain a school register of students with SEN
- To communicate the needs of students to teachers
- To assist in the identification of students with SEN.
- To ensure that IEP's and structured learning plans are in place for students with SEN.
- To advise teachers of the recommendations made in professional assessments relating to individual students.
- To assist the Principal in the allocation of resources.
- To process applications for Reasonable Accommodations at State Exams (RACE)
- To provide RACE in house exam where possible given the resources available
- To liaise with outside professionals
- To meet with parents in order to plan and to review interventions
- To administer and correct standardised assessments
- To ensure that systems are in place for the referral of students by teachers, parents, etc
- To be a member of the Pastoral Care Team.
- To advise and collaborate with SNA's around the care needs of relevant students.

Role of Learning Support Teacher

- Providing diagnostic and informal assessments for students at regular intervals in order to monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention
- Collaborating with subject teachers by giving advice on teaching methodologies best suited to a student.
- Providing direct teaching to a student with SEN either to reinforce the teaching that takes place in the classroom or to improve upon the core skills that may be necessary to successfully access the second level curriculum.
- To provide team teaching/ cooperative teaching when withdrawal from the classroom may not be the most appropriate means of supporting the student.
- Contributing at meetings involving parents and/or outside agencies when appropriate.

- Collecting and analysing school-wide screening data, including in-take screening, transfer information, attendance and behavioural records. Gathering information from subject teachers/ other staff
- Planning, implementing and reviewing individual and/or group interventions
- Seeking external professional advice, as needed
- To advise SNA's around the care needs of relevant students.

Role of Guidance Counsellor

- To work with the other members of the SEN team in facilitating the provision of education for students with SEN and their inclusion in the school.
- Counselling in personal, educational and career development
- Co-ordinating a number of assessments including the CAT4 at entry and.
- Providing career information
- Presenting at the Options Information Evening for students and parents of students progressing to Senior Cycle
- Consulting with parents and staff
- Providing vocational preparation - job search skills, preparation for work experience
- Working closely with the SEN team to identify students requiring support
- Facilitating individual appointments for students in third year, TY and Leaving Cert Year to support them in making career decisions
- Advising students and parents on subject choice and subject load
- To liaise with students, parents and the SEN team in relation to DARE applications.

Role of SNAs

- To provide care assistance to named students who have special educational needs. They make a valuable contribution to the school's capacity to provide inclusive education to these students.
- To be made aware of the SEN plan, devised by the Special Needs Support Team, and given guidance on their role in the successful implementation of this plan.
- To recognise their role in the health and safety of the student and in their social, emotional and educational development, without developing a culture of dependency.
- Attending both Staff and Departmental meetings when appropriate.
- Assisting / escorting students on school trips.
- Giving special assistance as necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. helping student with SEN with typing, writing or other use of equipment.
- Assisting with clothing, feeding, toileting and hygiene, being mindful of health and safety needs of the student.
- Assisting with house examinations (if appropriate).
- Assisting the teacher in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreation and in movement from one classroom to another.
- Give general assistance to the subject teacher, under the direction of the Principal/Deputy Principal, of a non-teaching nature. **The SNA may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class.**

- Participation with school development planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school development process.
- Engagement with parents of students with SEN as required and directed by school management.
- Other appropriate duties as may be determined by the needs of the pupils and the school.
- The SNA may be re-assigned to other appropriate work when special needs students are absent or when particularly urgent work demands arise.
- To treat all matters relating to school business and their work, as strictly confidential.

Role of Mainstream Teacher

- To be aware of the School's policy and procedures (as outlined in this policy) for dealing with students with SEN, and ensure all students needs are met.
- To seek advice from the SEN Department regarding students with SEN.
- To participate in CPD in the area of SEN.
- To devise a plan, in consultation with the resource teacher or SEN Co-ordinate, on the most effective use of an SNA for a student in the class.
- To support/ encourage independence in the student.
- To differentiate teaching and learning activities for students, including exceptionally able/gifted students
- To create a positive classroom environment for all students.
- To create opportunities for success
- To establish and teach behavioural and learning expectations.
- To assess/ monitor progress.
- To consider the needs of students with SEN in all aspects of classroom planning.
- To identify students who may be at risk (considering general progress, application, communication, behaviour, or interaction with other students).
- To complete referral forms, transfer of information forms, etc as required by the SEN team
- Contribute to group or individual planning and review
- Implement agreed strategies
- Prepare information for IEP planning meetings
- Implement individualised and specialist programmes and strategies
- Direct the work of the SNAs in the classroom
- Inform parents of the progress of students through the parent-teacher meeting and school reports.
- Contribute to the school development planning for their subject area whilst always having concern for students with SEN.
- Build a bank of differentiated resources pertaining to their subject area, which are shared collegially.

Provision and the Continuum of Support

Continuum of Support

The model of assessment and intervention, as practised in Seamount College is underpinned by recognition that special educational needs occur along a continuum, from mild to severe and from transient to long term. Our response to the needs of students is organised according to NEPS's Continuum of Support.

Student Support Plans and Individual Education Plans

A Student Support Plan is devised for students with Special Education needs. All students involved in SEN support will have a tailored learning plan, with students with resource teaching hours or more complex needs having a more detailed IEP.

The I.E.P process involves:

- Gathering Information: Personal/ Background details.
- Educational details (primary school details/assessment and learning support details)
- Categorisation of need (assessment reports/ information attained from parents)
- General profile based on formal/informal assessment.
- SEN provision
- Priority Need
- Setting targets for each priority learning need:
- Identifying the strategies and resources required:
- Relevant documentation
- Setting the date for review: A review occurs each academic year. However it may occur more often dependent on student progress and circumstances

These IEP's aim to include the most relevant information in a clear and concise manner.

Enrolment

The schools admissions policy outlines the procedures with regard to the enrolment of students with SEN (See Appendix 1).

PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH KNOWN AND DOCUMENTED NEEDS

Transfer from Primary School

The transfer of information from primary level to post-primary level is vital to the successful support of students with SEN. The Special Needs Coordinator also will:

- Visit or contact the feeder Primary Schools to collect up-to-date information.
- Liaise with primary school and parents of students with very specific needs who would benefit from more than one visit to the school .
- Meet with the parent/ guardian of students with SEN.

- Establish communication with the primary school resource/ learning support teacher.
- Apply for Resource Teaching Hours/SNA support/Assistive Technology for students for relevant students.

Once accepted to Seamount College:

- All incoming first year students take a Cognitive Ability Test; CAT 4 and a National Group Reading Tests (NGRT) These tests can also be used to identify strengths and needs of incoming students with SEN. This data is used to help identify students who may need additional support, including exceptionally able students.
- The SEN team will ascertain the students learning style and strengths.
- The SEN team will create learning targets for each student with SEN. These targets are monitored and evaluated at regular intervals. Once achieved, new targets are set.
- At the beginning of each academic year all students on the SEN Register are reviewed individually in terms of type of support needed and curriculum load.

Students transferring into other Year Groups

When a student is accepted into a year group other than First Year, information is sought from their previous school (Educational Psychological report, School reports, attendance, etc) This is the responsibility of the Principal/ Deputy Principal. Any relevant information is then passed to the Year Head and the Special Needs Co-ordinator.

PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH EMERGING NEEDS

For students with emerging needs, including the exceptionally able, the concern may have been identified through the whole school screening and monitoring systems (CAT4, NGRT, in class assessment, informal observation, parental concern).

Teachers are asked to complete a referral form for students who they have a concern about that focuses on the student's behaviour, academic performance, homework etc. Some students will need further individual or diagnostic testing to identify the nature of their needs (both learning and behavioural). Parental consent is obtained before diagnostic tests are administered. Teachers are also encouraged to refer to students' CAT 4 results to determine the student's areas of strength and their needs and link with at least two other subject teachers before completing a referral form.

Models of SEN provision

In assessing and deciding which students need to be in receipt of supplementary teaching and which students may benefit from support within the mainstream context the following options are considered:

- Curricular differentiation
- Curricular reduction (reduced load) - A student with SEN who experiences difficulty in coping with the breadth of the current curriculum is permitted to 'drop' a subject. This occurs only after all avenues have been exhausted. A consultation between the parents/ guardian and guidance teacher is also necessary. Parents must sign a consent form giving permission for a reduced subject load.
- In-class support/Differentiation
- Inclusion of SNA in specific classes
- Small group withdrawal
- Individual withdrawal
- Organisation and Life Skills lessons

The period of intervention recommended for each student is dependent on the nature and extent of their individual need. The duration of provision is varied and is reviewed throughout the intervention. There are cases where support is needed on a short-term basis, after which the student is in a position to recommence with the regular curriculum. All decisions in this regard are discussed with parents/guardians, class teachers, the student, principal and guidance counsellor.

Reasonable Accommodations for State and In House Examinations (RACE)

Applications are made by the SEN Coordinator for RACE provision for students with SEN sitting a Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate Examination.

Information relating to RACE is provided to parents on an annual basis at an information meeting held in the school.

The following are the range of accommodations available to the students which are applied for as per circular criteria. Accommodations are granted by The State Examinations Commission. From October 2016 the State Exams Commission SEC will operate a devolved model at both Junior and Leaving Cert Level. The school will make application for relevant accommodations for students who meet the criteria as laid down by the SEC at Junior Cycle and these accommodations can be reactivated for Leaving Cert, with the school being satisfied that the student still has a need for the accommodation. Further details are available in the RACE Guide for Exam Students 2017 at www.examinations.ie.

Where resources permit and when deemed appropriate, readers, scribes and other accommodations are available to students who qualify for such accommodations at mock exams and other school assessments. Students in non-exam years sitting a

differentiated test will have that noted on their report. Specialised reports can be created where the student has sat many differentiated exams during in-house assessments.