

# Educational Support Policy

## Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance for our teachers, parents and other interested parties on the provisions made to students who are experiencing difficulties of whatever nature in college e.g. socially, emotionally, physically, behaviourally, sensory and/or their learning.

Legally schools must “ensure that the educational needs of students, including those with disability or special needs are identified and provided for.” (The Education Act 1998, Section 9, p.13).

“Disability” (Education Act 1998) or “Special Educational Needs” (Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004) means in relation to a person, a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition.” (The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Bill 2004, Section 52, p.36), this is also known as the EPSEN Act.

Dunboyne College of Further Education favours inclusion and for this both flexibility and creativity is needed. Therefore we aim to provide an optimum learning environment for all our students. To ensure this

- Teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind.
- Lessons encourage the participation of all students.
- Students are actively involved in their own learning.
- Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect.
- Teachers plan, teach and review in partnership with other teachers and individual students.
- Special Needs Assistants provide the link and vital follow-on required for SEN learners who chose to avail of Student Support Services during their day-to-day participation in school.

## **Enrolment Policy of Students with Special Educational Needs.**

Dunboyne College of Further Education is non selective academically and welcomes students of varying abilities. It aims to provide for the needs of each individual student. Students with SEN may learn at a different pace and in a different way from other students but they also need to belong to a peer group. Mixing with students of different abilities in a variety of situations is beneficial to all.

All learners are catered for in the mainstream classroom but those with SEN may (only when required) be withdrawn individually and/or in small groups for additional support.

The rationale of this policy is based on the principles laid out in the EPSEN Act which state that:

- “The education of people with SEN shall take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs unless it’s not in their best interest”,
- “People with SEN shall have the same right to avail of and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers”, and
- “That people with SEN leave school with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives.”(***EPSEN Act 2004***)

## **Identification of students with Special Educational Needs**

The identification of students with SEN starts at the interview process

- Students advise the college re SEN on the application form – then they are encouraged to contact the SEN co-ordinator or speak to the SEN Team on Open Night or at the time of interview.
- A copy of the student's medical or psychological report must be provided to the Learning support team.
- The necessary support is requested from the Learning Support team.
- We liaise with the student's secondary school regarding the support received there.
- On receipt of the support granted a decision is made on how best to maximise the benefit to the student i.e. team-teaching, withdrawal or both
- An individual support programme will be put in place for students where necessary
- All staff are informed, every September, about the SEN of the students and re-advised at subsequent staff meetings.

## **The Learning Support Team and Categories of SEN**

The aim of the learning support team is to optimise the teaching and learning process so that all students, no matter what their ability, receive an education suitable to their needs. The role of supporting learning is a collaborative responsibility shared by all :- The Board of Management, the Principal, Subject Teachers, Learning Support Staff, Parents and students themselves. It is vital that everyone contributes to the planning and implementation of our school plan on learning support/resource.

## **Academic Accommodations**

If Student Support Services identify a need and feel it necessary for the learners successful academic progression; they may recommend a component certificate, enrolment in a different course , QQI level 4 or a transferal to another centre within Louth Meath Education and Training Board.

## **Categories of SEN**

To date in Dunboyne College of Further Education we have included students with the following SEN Learning Support Students

- Borderline/Mild General Learning Difficulties
- Specific Learning Difficulty (Dyslexia and Dyscalculia)
- Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties (e.g. ADD and ADHD)
- Physical Difficulties (Dyspraxia, Wheelchair user, Cerebral palsy, Spina Bifida)
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD e.g. Asperger's Syndrome)
- Sensory Difficulty (Visual and Hearing Impairment)
- Developmental conditions
- Medical difficulties that have led to the need for learning support

## **International Students with English Language Needs**

As a college that fosters inclusion we aim to integrate students from minority ethnic backgrounds and ensure that they mix with Irish students both in and out of the classroom. We also have small groups that meet in the aim where possible, to build on the development of students English language skills.

The college, through its normal operating procedures shall ensure that adequate additional teaching and resource support is applied for and allocated as per regulations of the DES and LMETB in respect of international students.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Partners in Special Education Needs**

### **Board of Management (BOM)**

- The Board of Management has an important role in developing, supporting and monitoring the school policy on Special Education Needs provision.
- The BOM oversee the development, implementation and review of school policy on SEN, ensure adequate accommodation and teaching resources and provides a secure facility for the storage of records in respect of SEN students.

### **Role of Principal**

*“The principal has overall responsibility for the school’s learning-support programme and for the operation of services for children with special educational needs”.* (Learning-Support Guidelines, pg. 38)

Therefore the principal (or his nominee) monitors the implementation of the college plan and the selection of students for supplementary teaching, ensuring that it is focused on those with SEN. The principal may assume direct responsibility for the co-ordination of learning-support or may assign these duties to another teacher.

### **Role of Subject Teacher**

*“A particular responsibility of the class teacher is to create a classroom environment in which learning difficulties can be prevented or at least alleviated”.* (Learning Support Guidelines, pg. 42)

The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all students in his/her class including those with SEN. The subject teacher plays an important role in the early identification of students who may have a general or specific learning difficulty. A key role of successful learning support is a very high level of consultation and co-operation between the subject teachers and the learning-support department.

### **Role of the Special Educational Needs Team**

This team consists of the principal, deputy principal, student-support staff, personal assistants and special needs assistants. The team works on collaborating, consulting and planning the workloads and timetables to best implement the school policy for students with SEN. The team will meet regularly, both formally and informally, to discuss programmes of work, resources, progress and any recent information received (with permission acquired from the individual learner) from outside agencies, parents / guardians etc. which relates to the learner. The pastoral care co-ordinator and guidance counsellor also support this team on a pastoral level.

## **The Role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator**

- To be the first point of contact on behalf of the teachers, personal assistants, SNAs when communicating to the Principal.
- To facilitate effective systems of communication between all staff and colleagues involved in the provision.
- To support all staff and colleagues involved in working within school policy in relation to special education need.
- To ensure that school policy and practice has regard for the integrity of the work the staff is doing.
- To facilitate the meeting schedule for the student support service team.
- To ensure that all action taken supports a student's progress, general well-being and learning.
- To supervise the day-to-day operation of the school's student support services policy, and to work closely with and under the overall direction of the school principal.
- To liaise with and advise other teachers.
- To regularly meet with SEN team, guidance counsellors and other relevant personnel as appropriate.
- To manage SNAs under direction of the Principal.
- To oversee the records of all students with SEN.
- To facilitate in-service needs and training of staff.
- To ensure distribution of suitable learning resources.
- To liaise with external agencies (NCSE, HEA, Second level pastoral care team, 3<sup>rd</sup> level institutions, Visiting Teacher etc.)
- To co-ordinate the provision for students with SEN and keep a register of needs and provisions
- To apply for all entitlements for SEN students, based on recommendations in the students psychological report (DARE and CAO done by our Guidance Team).

### **Role of the Learning-Support Team.**

The activities of the learning-support team should include both teaching and non-teaching duties. *“The particular balance that the learning-support teacher achieves between supplementary teaching and consultative activities will depend on the specific circumstances of the school” (Learning-support guidelines pg32)*

- Learning Support Team members facilitate diagnostic assessments, monitoring and advice to subject teachers, students and parents. The work of the Learning Support Team can be divided into the following key areas:
- Assessment and identification of students with SEN
- Consultation with colleagues on appropriate materials, methodologies and strategies to help obviate barriers
- In class support or withdrawal of learners where deemed necessary.
- Participating in staff and curriculum development
- Liaising with students, parents/ guardians, staff and SEN team with the learner’s permission.

## **Role of Special Needs Assistants**

- Special Needs Assistants work closely with and under the direction of the Principal and the Special Educational Needs co-ordinator and the individual subject teachers in the implementation of the college's policy as it relates to individual or groups of students. The SNAs play a very important role in the health and safety of the learner/s and in his/her/their social and emotional development.
- The special needs assistants work as a team to encourage students with emotional, physical development and learning difficulties, offering support both inside and outside the classroom environment. The SNA acts as a vital link between student, teacher and home, reporting and reviewing the progress of the students while identifying any apparent difficulties or strategies of interventions that may be required to be put in place. The SNA works to encourage the inclusion and autonomy of all students.
- Their duties involve tasks of a *non-teaching nature* such as:
  - Assisting students with the writing of notes, homework etc.
  - Assist and accompany on trips
  - Assist with supervision during recreational and other times where necessary
  - Accompanying individuals or groups who may have been temporarily withdrawn from the classroom.
  - Generally assisting subject teachers under the direction of the Principal or Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

## **Role of Parents/Guardians (of students under the age of 18)**

*"Parents through their unique knowledge of their own child, have much to contribute to their child's learning programme"*, (Learning-Support Guidelines pg. 52)

The contribution of parents/guardians to their child's learning has a hugely positive influence on the overall progress and self-esteem of the student with SEN. The staff at Dunboyne College of Further Education believe that partnership between home and college is important as, with positive and active partnership, the SEN student gets the best that the school can offer. We therefore give a warm welcome and encouragement to parents/guardians of those students under the age of eighteen.

## **Role of Students**

*“The involvement of pupils in the development, implementation and review of their own learning programmes is an important principle underlining effective supplementary teaching”.* (Learning-Support Guidelines pg54)

Learning to take responsibility for their own learning is an important step in becoming independent learners. This occurs when the students are familiar with short-term targets and set their own. Learners should select their own research material where possible to attain these targets. Students should also apply learning strategies learnt during meetings with student support services to the classroom environment. Learners should also evaluate their programme by self-assessing their work; and play an active role in their own learning.

## **Liaison with outside agencies**

Dunboyne College of Further Education and its staff recognise that there are times when it may be necessary to seek the expert advice of external professionals. This they are willing to do when the need arises. The principal or a designated member of staff will co-ordinate the referral in accordance with the protocol of said agency. These may include:-

- a) Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO), who processes the applications for resources for students with SEN
- b) National Education Psychological Service (NEPS), who consults, advises and makes recommendations re supporting individual students
- c) Health Service Executive (HSE), who oversee the child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)
- d) Department of Education Visiting Teacher Service
- e) Special Educational Support Service (SESS)
- f) Educational Psychologists
- g) Psychologists

## **Recommendations re the implementation of this plan:-**

This is a working document and it will need to be reviewed, evaluated and altered as necessary as the college develops. It will be a collaborative and consultative process that will involve all the school staff, with the support and co-operation of the Board of Management.