

Learning Support Policy

Whole School Plan For Learning Support Provision in St. Safan's N.S.

This policy contains the following:

- ✓ Situation.
- ✓ Aims of Learning Support.
- ✓ Principles
- ✓ Staff Roles and Responsibilities.
 - Role of the Board of Management
 - Role of Principal
 - Role of Class Teacher
 - Role of Learning Support Teacher
 - Role of Resource Teacher
 - Role of Parents
 - Role of Pupils

- ✓ Internal Provision.
- ✓ Prevention Strategies.
- ✓ Early Intervention Programme.
- ✓ Screening , Assessment , Caseload , Selection , Permissions and Review.

1 Initial screening

2 Diagnostic assessment

3 Caseload decisions

4 Selection criteria

5 Parental permission

6 Staff meetings

7 Travelling time

8 Review of Learning Support Policy

- ✓ Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching.
- ✓ Monitoring Progress.
- ✓ Liaising with Parents.

Situation:

In September 2015, we employed a Learning Support Teacher for the year September 2015 - June 2016. It was agreed between Principal Breda McConnell & Principal of our cluster school Dromore, Mrs Mary McGranaghan that our Learning Support Teacher would remain in our school to teach five of our resource hours. This was clarified with the Department of Education and to save all travel time & disruption. It was also agreed between the two Principals that this arrangement would be reviewed end of June 2016.

Aims of Learning Support:

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

2.1 Subsidiary Aims.

To enable children to participate in the full curriculum for their class level.

To develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning.

To enable children to monitor their own learning and become independent learners.

To provide supplementary teaching and additional support in English and/or maths.

To involve parents in supporting their children.

To promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole - school policies on learning support

To establish early intervention groups in senior infants

To establish an intervention group in second class.

To establish other class intervention groups if weaknesses are noted during the year.

To support children with resource hours.

Principles:

Effective whole-school policies

Parental involvement

Prevention of failure

Provision of intensive early intervention.

Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need.

Priorities:

1 Lowest literacy achievers.

2 Early Intervention Group in senior infants.

3 Lowest achievers in Maths.

4. In class/Teaming teaching where possible.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities :

The role of supporting learning is a collaborative responsibility shared by all:-

The Board of Management, Principal Teacher, Class Teachers, Learning Support Teacher, Resource Teacher, Parents and Children.

Role of the Board of Management

To oversee the development, implementation and review of the learning support policy

To ensure that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the learning support teacher.

To provide adequate funds for the purchase of learning support materials
"Funds provided for these materials should not be limited to the learning support grant provided by the Department of Education and Science" (Learning Support Guidelines p.47)

To provide a secure facility for storage of records relating to pupils in receipt of learning support.

Role of the Principal.

"The principal teacher 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 p.38)

Liaise regularly with the learning support teacher "in order to support the implementation of school policy on learning support as outlined in the school plan. The principal teacher should arrange a meeting with the learning support teacher at least once a term to discuss the implementation of the school plan on learning support" (Learning Support Guidelines p40)

Assume direct responsibility or delegate responsibility for co-ordinating learning support and special needs services.

Typically, the duties assigned to this role would include

1 Maintaining a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and/or special educational services.

2 Help to co-ordinate the caseloads/ work schedules of the learning support and resource teachers

3 Supporting the implementation of a tracking at whole school level to monitor the progress of children with learning difficulties

4 Advise parents on procedures for availing of special needs services

5 Liaising with external services such as psychological services to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs

6 Arrange for classroom accommodation and resources as appropriate.

Role of Class Teacher :

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

"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 p 42)

This can be achieved by :

1 Grouping pupils for instruction

2 Providing lower -achieving pupils with strategies for reading, spelling and problem solving

3 Adapting learning materials for lower-achieving pupils

4 Liaising closely with parents

When supplementary teaching cannot be provided for a pupil, or is being phased out or discontinued, the class teacher will need to develop and implement a support programme that meets the pupil's changing needs, in consultation with the learning support teacher.

Administer Micra-T and Sigma-T screening tests and discuss outcomes with the learning support teacher

Recommend pupils who may need supplementary teaching

Help develop individual educational programmes (I.E.P) by collaborating with learning support teacher , identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve those targets.

Adjust the class programme in line with agreed learning targets on the I.E.P

With regard to teaching pupils with low achievement , the following general approaches and methods are recommended:

1 Group teaching

2 Modifying presentation and questioning

3 Placing emphasis on oral language development across the curriculum

4 Providing pupils with extra tutoring in the key basic skills in literacy and numeracy

5 Setting targets at an appropriate level

6 Providing success

A key role of successful learning support is a very high level of consultation and co-operation between the class teacher and the learning support teacher.

Central to this is the development, implementation and review of individual educational plans (I.E.P).

This consultation will be achieved through formal time-tabling and through informal consultation as the need arises.

In the case of each pupil who has been identified as experiencing low achievement and/or a learning difficulty the class teacher should:

1 Make parents aware of the concerns of the school about their child's progress

2 Outline the school's practices regarding the administration of diagnostic tests by the learning support teacher and seek the approval of the parents to proceed with diagnostic assessment

3 Outline the support that is available in the school to pupils who experience low achievement and/or learning difficulties

4 Indicate to the pupil's parents that a meeting with the learning support teacher will follow the assessment

5 After the diagnostic assessment, attend if possible, the meeting between the pupil's parents and the learning support teacher and indicate how the pupil's class programme will be modified in order to achieve learning targets in pupil's I.E.P.

Role of the Learning Support Teacher :

The activities of the learning support teacher 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 2000)

In this school the learning support teacher is shared between two schools

The learning support teacher's activities include:

Assisting in the implementation of a broad range of whole-school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to prevent learning difficulties

Developing an I.E.P (Individual Education Plan) for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching, in consultation with class teachers and parents

Maintaining a fortnightly progress report for each individual and group

Maintaining a termly plan

Delivering an intensive Early Intervention Programme to senior infants.

Delivering an Intervention Programme to any other class group during the year if deemed necessary

Co-ordinating the implementation of whole-school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, giving due consideration to:

1 The selection criteria specified in this Learning Support Policy

2 Class teachers' professional observations

3 Input from parents

Contributing to the development of policy on learning support at the whole school level.

Providing advice to the Class Teacher, if requested, on:

1 individual pupil assessment

2 Programme planning

3 Curriculum differentiation

4 Approaches to language development

5 Approaches to reading

6 Approaches to spelling

7 Approaches to writing

8 Approaches to Mathematics

Contributing at school level to decision making regarding the purchase of learning resources, books and materials in their mainstream classrooms and in the learning support room

Liaising with external agencies such as educational psychologists, speech and language therapists etc. to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs

Collaborate with the principal and meet with her once a term to discuss issues relating to the development and implementation of the school plan on learning support, and the provision of learning support

Consult with class teachers on the identification of pupils who may need diagnostic assessment, taking into account pupils' scores on Micra-T and Sigma-T, class teachers' own views of the pupils' difficulties and needs and the number of pupils to whom learning support can be provided

Carry out a comprehensive diagnostic assessment of each pupil who has been identified as experiencing low achievement and /or learning difficulties and , in

consultation with the class teacher and parents , identify the type and level of learning support that is needed to meet the pupil's needs

In addition to providing supplementary teaching to pupils, the learning support teacher is involved in administering a range of formal and informal assessments and in maintaining records of the outcomes of those assessments.

The learning support teacher should:

1 Conduct an initial diagnostic assessment of each pupil who has been identified as having low achievement and/or a learning difficulty based on results of Micra-T and/or Sigma-T and record the findings.

2 Monitor the ongoing progress of each pupil in receipt of supplementary teaching in relation to the attainment of agreed learning targets and short-term objectives that arise from them, and record the observations

3 Review the progress of each pupil at the end of an instructional term

4 In collaboration with class teacher decide if pupil can discontinue attending learning support due to significant improvement or if pupil needs to continue.

Role of Resource Teacher :

Most of this policy document makes reference to learning support provision and to the Learning Support Teacher. At present this school does not have the services of a full time Resource Teacher, instead part-time hours are provided for pupils who have been assessed as having a specific learning disability.

The Resource Teacher should:

Develop an Individual Educational Programme (I.E.P.) for each child who is in receipt of resource hours, in consultation with the class teacher and parents.

Maintain a weekly planning and progress record or equivalent for each individual in receipt of resource hours

Provide supplementary teaching commensurate with the child's particular and individual needs

Research the pupil's specific learning difficulty, to become au fait with this impediment to learning

Implement recommendations from outside agencies, wherever possible

Maintain confidential records on each of her pupils

Assess their pupils on an on-going basis, and record their progress

Liaise with outside agencies pertinent to the children in their care

Liaise with the class teacher regularly

Meet with parents of each pupil who is in receipt of resource hours to discuss targets and ways in which attainment of the targets can be supported at home

Meet with parents of each pupil who is in receipt of resource hours at the end of each instructional term:

1 To review the pupil's attainment of agreed targets

2 To discuss the next instructional term

3 To revise the pupil's I.E.P.

Provide advice to class teachers in areas such as individual pupil assessment, programme planning, differentiation of the curriculum, as well as approaches to language development, reading, writing and mathematics for pupils in receipt of resource hours.

Role of Parents :

"Parents through their unique knowledge of their own child, have much to contribute to their child's learning programmes" (Learning Support Guidelines p52)

Parents can prepare for and support the work of the school by:

Provide a home environment where there are opportunities for adults and children to participate together in language, literacy and mathematical activities in the early years before formal schooling begins

Supporting the work of the school by participating with their child in activities such as :

1 Using I.C.T. where available, to support learning in english and/or maths

2 Book sharing/ reading stories

3 Story-telling

4 Paired reading (listening to and giving feedback on oral reading)

5 Discussions about school and other activities to build vocabulary and thinking skills

6 Writing lists and short accounts about children's experiences

7 Counting and measuring and other activities involving number

8 Visits to the zoo, museum, library etc.... to broaden the range of their child's experiences

9 Where their child is in receipt of supplementary teaching, implementing suggested home-based activities outlined in their child's I.E.P. and discussing the outcomes with the child's teachers

Talking positively about school and school work:

Availing of real-life situations to discuss the importance of language, literacy and mathematics

Modelling involvement in language, literacy and mathematical activities at home by engaging in and talking about these activities

Where the child is in receipt of supplementary teaching, implementing suggested home-based activities outlined in their I.E.P. and discussing the outcomes with the child's teachers

Parents should keep the class teacher informed of the progress that they observe in their child's learning. They should also let the school know of any learning difficulties that they observe in their child at home. If , following diagnostic assessment, the child has been identified as requiring supplementary teaching the parents should attend a meeting with the learning support teacher to discuss:

1 The results of the assessment

2 The learning targets in the child's I.E.P.

3 The actions taken by the school to meet those targets

4 The ways in which attainment of the targets can be supported at home

Where a child is in receipt of supplementary teaching from the learning support teacher the parent should:

1 Discuss the child's progress with the learning support teacher at the end of each instructional term and at Parent-Teacher meeting in February, parents can also meet the learning support teacher on a monthly basis if they wish, and, in cases where supplementary teaching is to be continued, discuss the revised learning targets and activities in their child's I.E.P.

2 At the discontinuation of supplementary teaching, discuss with their child's teachers how the child's future learning needs can continue to be met at school and at home

3 Participate in activities organised by the school that are designed to increase the involvement of parents in the children's learning

4 Become familiar with and contribute to the development of the school plan on learning support individually and through involvement in parents' associations.

Role of Pupils :

Pupils who are in receipt of supplementary teaching should , as appropriate:

Become familiar with the medium and short-term learning targets that have been set for them and they should be given the opportunity to contribute to the setting of such target

Contribute to the selection of texts and other learning materials that are relevant to the attainment of their learning targets.

Look after their folder, copy, reading record card and books from Learning Support library etc. and co-operate with regard to work given.

Develop 'ownership' of the skills and strategies that are taught during supplementary teaching and learn to apply these learning strategies and skills to improve their own learning.

Contribute to the evaluation of their progress by participation in appropriate assessment activities, including self-assessment.

"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, p.54)

Internal Provision :

Prevention Strategies :

Our strategies for preventing learning difficulties include :

The development of agreed approaches to the teaching of English and Mathematics in order to ensure progression and continuity from class to class.

Provision of an Early Intervention Programme in literacy to all senior infants.

Provision of additional support in language development and relevant early literacy and mathematical skills to pupils who need it.

Ongoing structured observation and assessment of the language , literacy and numeracy skills of pupils in infants to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties.

Close collaboration and consultation between the teacher of infants and the Learning Support teacher.

Early Intervention programme :

Senior infants receive support in Phonological Awareness & Language. This normally occurs in terms 2 & 3. Parents are informed in advance of the Early Intervention Programme.

Includes a strong emphasis on oral language , laying the foundation for meaningful reading activities and further development of language and comprehension skills

Emphasises the development of phonemic awareness and a range of other word identification skills

Stresses the interconnected nature of listening, speaking , reading and writing.

A large part of the Early Intervention programme is children's enjoyment of playing with sounds, rhyming, clapping out syllables , listening to poems and short easy stories with lots of rhyming words and playing games to consolidate the letter names and sounds.

Screening , Assessment, Caseload, Selection, Permissions and Review.

a. Initial Screening :

Class teachers carry out the initial screening tests. Class teachers record results of Micra-T and Sigma-T standardised tests.

b. Diagnostic Assessment :

The Learning Support teacher discusses results of Micra-T and Sigma-T with class teachers and principals and carries out further screening and diagnostic testing where it is deemed necessary.

c. Caseload Decisions :

The number of children to be taught by the Learning Support Teacher is decided at the start of the year . This includes individuals, class groups & team teaching.

d. Selection Criteria :

Micra-T and Sigma -T results.

Class teacher recommendation

Parental recommendation

Other relevant professionals e.g. Educational psychologists

e. Parental Permission :

Written parental permission is required for children to attend Learning Support.

Written parental permission is also required for the Learning Support Teacher to undertake individual, diagnostic testing.

The following letter is sent to parents to receive permission for children to attend Learning Support. It is on headed school paper and is signed by the principal, Mrs Breda Mc Connell.

Dear _____,

As a result of ongoing assessment in school, it has been noted that _____, would benefit from some extra help with literacy/ maths. This extra help would be provided in our learning support room by our learning support teacher.

You are welcome to meet with the Learning Support Teacher to discuss your child's progress at the next parent/teacher meeting or by appointment.

Please sign and detach the permission slip below and return to the class teacher.

Yours sincerely,

Breda Mc Connell

Principal

f. Staff Meetings :

The Learning Support Teacher attends staff meetings at the base school.

g Travelling Time.

Travelling time is kept to a minimum as both schools are nearby.

Review of Learning Support Policy :

The Learning Support Policy is a working document and is constantly under review.

Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching:

An instructional term is generally taken to mean 13-20 weeks of instruction.

A meeting will be held with parents to discuss learning targets and activities in the pupil's Individual Profile and Learning Programme at a pre-arranged time

Parent / Teacher meeting in Learning Support Room.

Supplementary teaching will normally be discontinued where the targets have been met or children are making satisfactory progress.

Liaising with Parents :

In addition to providing general information to parents about the learning support services that are available in the school, the Learning Support Teacher should

Meet with the parents of each pupil who has been selected for diagnostic assessment (if such a meeting is requested at this point by the parents)

After the initial diagnostic assessment has been completed, meet with each pupil's parents to discuss the outcomes of the assessment.

Discuss the learning targets in the child's I.E.P. with the parents, the actions to be taken by the school to meet those targets and the ways in which attainment of the targets can be supported at home(if it is decided that supplementary teaching will be provided by the Learning Support Teacher)

Communicate on an ongoing basis with the parents of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching so that progress can be positively affirmed and any difficulties in implementing the pupil's learning programme at school or at home can either be anticipated and avoided or addressed without delay.

Consult with the parents of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching at the end of the instructional term to review the pupil's attainment of agreed learning targets, to discuss the level of supplementary teaching (if continuing) that will be provided in the next instructional term and to revise the pupil's I.E. P. as necessary.

Consult with parents when supplementary teaching is to be discontinued and identify ways in which the pupil's learning can continue to be supported at school and at home.

Demonstrate techniques and strategies to parents that will enable them to help with their child's development in such areas as oral language, reading, writing, spelling and mathematics.

Where relevant, collaborate with other teachers to advise parents on ways in which they can support their children's learning at home.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

Ratification

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management

On 10/9/15

Signed: Michael Porter

Date: 10th September 2015