

# LEARNING SUPPORT & SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY



**Módh Scoil Láir Naíonán, Sráid Maoilbhríde,  
Baile Átha Cliath 1.**

**Central Model Infants' School, Marlborough Street,  
Dublin 1.**

Tel/Fax: (01) 8788 344

E- Mail: [info@centralmodelinfantschool.ie](mailto:info@centralmodelinfantschool.ie)

Website: [www.centralmodelinfantschool.ie](http://www.centralmodelinfantschool.ie)

### OUR ETHOS

The Central Model Infants' School is a co-educational school, under the patronage of the Minister of Education. The Central Model Infants' School is an inclusive, child centred Learning Community. Respectful relationships are fundamental to us. We achieve excellence through high expectations, teamwork and shared leadership. We aim to nourish and develop each child's sense of their own self-worth as an individual and celebrate their unique gifts and talents.

The provision and commitment to such education entails supporting each child in reaching their full potential. Keeping the values of our mission statement to the fore, the purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for Parents, Teachers, Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) and other interested parties on the provision of effective learning support to pupils, to plan for the educational needs of children in our school with Special Educational Needs (SEN), as well as to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act (1998).

While only a small minority of children will have an identified or assessed SEN as defined by the EPSEN Act, a larger number of our pupils may experience short or long term difficulties with learning. This policy addresses how we meet the needs of all children including the organisation of learning support in our school. It refers to and should be read alongside our:

- ✚ Assessment Policy
- ✚ SNA Policy
- ✚ Data Protection Policy
- ✚ Enrolment Policy
- ✚ Code of Behaviour
- ✚ Anti-Bullying Policy
- ✚ DEIS action plan.

### Context

Central Model Infants' School was established in 1859. It is a co-educational school comprising Junior Infants, Senior Infants and First Classes under the patronage of the Minister of Education and Skills. It is a Delivery Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Band 1 school. The pupil population is currently 178 pupils ranging from Junior Infants to First Class. Over 80% of our children are learning English as an additional language.

The school currently has the following staff allocation

- ✚ 11 Class Teachers
- ✚ 2.1 Learning Support Teachers
- ✚ 1 Resource Teacher for children with assessed Special Educational Needs
- ✚ 4 English as an Additional Language (EAL) Teachers
- ✚ 2 Special Needs Assistants.
- ✚ Shared Support Teacher (.5)
- ✚ Shared Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Teacher (.33)

### Learning Support

**The principal stated aim** of Learning Support provision is *'to optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils help pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school'*.

### Specific Objectives of Learning Support

Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

- ✚ Facilitate pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level

- ✚ Help pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving our school
- ✚ Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning
- ✚ Enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners within their own ability
- ✚ Involve parents in supporting their children's learning
- ✚ Promote collaboration among teachers.

### Organisation

The DEIS status of our school, the young ages of our pupils and the fact that most are learning English as an additional language influences the way we organise support for our children using available staffing and resources. In line with current best practice our focus is on supporting children in their classes with an option for withdrawal for individual or group work where appropriate. Support teachers (Learning Support, Resource, EAL, EBD Support) work in collaboration with Class Teachers. At present we have a Maths Team, a Literacy Team and an EAL Team. However flexibility and a holistic approach is key and teachers may work in one or more year groups and support children with needs in one or more areas (Maths, Literacy, Language, Emotional and Behavioural needs.)

### **We regularly monitor, review and adapt our practice in order to best respond to the needs of our children.**

Under the terms of the General Allocation Model outlined in DES Circular 02/05, the following categories of pupils will receive supplementary teaching from a Learning Support / Resource Teacher:

- ✚ Pupils who have been identified as being in the low incidence category (Appendix 1 Sp. Ed. Circular 02/05) receive an individual allocation of support through the Special Education Needs Organiser. (SENO)
- ✚ Pupils who have special educational needs arising from high incidence disabilities (borderline mild general learning disability, mild general learning disability and specific learning disability).
- ✚ Pupils with learning difficulties, pupils with mild social or emotional difficulties and pupils with mild co-ordination or attention control difficulties associated with identified conditions.

**Note:** Arrangements for the delivery of allocated Resource Hours will be reviewed regularly and based on the needs of the child and the school. This may take the form of 1 to 1 / group withdrawal or in-class support, or a combination of both. As we use a team approach more than one teacher may be involved in supporting each child.

Our school recognises that effective learning programmes are based on the following principles:

- ✚ Effective whole-school policies.
- ✚ Whole school involvement.
- ✚ Provision of intensive early intervention from Junior Infants to First Class.
- ✚ Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need.
- ✚ Setting suitable learning challenges.
- ✚ Responding to children's diverse learning needs.
- ✚ Overcoming barriers to learning and assessment.

### Prevention Strategies/ Early Intervention

As a means of preventing the occurrence of learning difficulties, as far as possible, the following strategies are being implemented:

- ✚ The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to language and

- literacy development e.g. phonological awareness, naming vocabulary.
- ✚ The development and implementation of an agreed whole school approach to the Maths programme e.g. Maths language.
- ✚ Promotion of parental involvement through their attendance at induction meetings for parents of Junior Infants in September.
- ✚ Inviting parents to observe Station Teaching in Maths and Language/Literacy in Junior Infants
- ✚ Formal and informal Parent/Teacher meetings.
- ✚ Class-based early intervention by the class teacher resulting in provision of additional support.
- ✚ In-class station teaching /group teaching for all in Language, Literacy and Maths from Junior Infants.
- ✚ Ongoing observation and informal/formal assessment of pupils by Class Teachers and Support Teachers.

### Literacy Support

We have 2 trained Reading Recovery Teachers on staff and teachers who have undertaken courses in First Steps and Aistear. Led by the Literacy Team, approaches and resources from these programmes are used to support language and literacy teaching and learning throughout the school. This takes the form of oral language focussed station teaching in Junior Infants and ability grouped literacy teaching in Senior Infants and First Class with an allocated teacher. Children needing most support work in smaller groups and may be withdrawn at Literacy time.

**Note:** While methods of organisation are subject to change the underlying principle is always that the children experiencing the greatest difficulty will get the most support. In the case of a team member being unavailable to teach a group, available teachers will prioritise the groups in greatest need.

### Reading Recovery

This is an intensive early intervention programme to assist children who are having particular difficulty learning to read and write. *One-to-one teaching is at the heart of the RR approach and it helps to prevent literacy difficulties from becoming entrenched and having extensive and long-lasting negative effects that impact on children's educational, social and emotional development.* “(DEIS action plan p.37). It consists generally of about 100 x 30 minute daily lessons. It is designed for pupils aged between 5 years 9 months and 6 years 3 months. We have 2 trained teachers and the number of available pupil places is decided yearly up to a maximum of 4 per teacher. Reading Recovery teachers attend ongoing CPD in Marino College.

### Selection of Children

Using information from teacher observation and formal assessments, Reading Recovery teachers screen a selection of Senior Infants / First Class pupils. In consultation with the school principal programme places are allocated on the basis of need and in general the oldest children with the lowest scores are given priority. A child's level of English is taken into account when allocating programme places. Reading Recovery teachers meet parents to explain the programme and obtain signed permission. Teachers and parents may observe an RR lesson for greater understanding of this methodology and how to support the pupil with their literacy skills.

### Maths Support

Staff have been trained in a number of initiatives including Aistear, Maths Recovery and Ready Set Go Maths. Led by the Maths Team, strategies, approaches and resources from these programmes are used to support differentiated class station teaching from the First Term in Junior Infants to the final term in First Class.

Children experiencing particular difficulties may also receive additional 1 to 1 or small group teaching from the Maths team at any time during the year.

### **English as an additional language (EAL)**

An important distinction to clarify is that Learning English as an additional language is not a Learning Difficulty. EAL and other support teachers work closely with class teachers primarily in classrooms to support access to the curriculum for all children. When children begin school it can sometimes be difficult to determine whether struggles with accessing the curriculum or settling in are because a child is learning English or because they may have an emerging learning, speech and language or emotional or behavioural difficulty. We believe in allowing children time to develop and with EAL support, teacher observation and good communication with parents most children will thrive. Children that continue to experience difficulties receive additional support.

### **Special Educational Needs**

Special Educational Needs (SEN) is defined in our school according to the Education for Persons with Special Needs (EPSN) Act, 2004;

“A restriction in capacity to participate in and benefit from education due to 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”

As an inclusive school we want all children particularly those with disabilities to feel that they are a valued part of the school community.

### **Enrolment of Children with Identified Special Educational Needs**

All children will be enrolled in Central Model Infants’ School under the guidelines of our Enrolment Policy. Prior to the child’s enrolment the school will carry out some of the following steps to familiarise ourselves with the child’s SEN.

- ✚ Obtain any reports, assessments etc., from parents, pre-school, other agencies involved with the child.
- ✚ Arrange meetings between parent/principal/class teacher/special needs staff and Special Needs Officer (SENO) as appropriate.
- ✚ Communicate with our SENO, National Education Psychological Services (NEPS) Psychologist or their psychologists/speech therapists/occupational therapists in relation the child’s educational needs.

The following steps may be followed in order to ensure a smooth transition to the school for both the pupil and the school:

- ✚ Arrange pupil and parental visits to the school.
- ✚ Staff visits to any special school/special unit/pre-school the new pupil has been attending.
- ✚ Making all school employees and pupils aware of the need for inclusion (EPSN Act 2004).
- ✚ Liaison with SENO and /or SESS to arrange for possible additional resources and training.
- ✚ Preparation by teachers, if appropriate and helpful, of other pupils for the inclusion and acceptance of a child with SEN.

If there are health and safety issues arising from the child’s mobility and care needs, the Central Model Infants School will consider these needs on an individual basis (e.g. access, toilets, supervision, and administration of medicine. etc).

### Children with Emerging Learning Difficulties/ Special Educational Needs

The LS/SEN coordinator meets class teachers in November and May to discuss and review concerns regarding pupil progress and make plans for additional support or referral where needed. We aim to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, children who may have difficulty learning and respond effectively to their needs. Where children are identified as needing additional support we use a Staged Approach to intervention adapted from the National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS) model to suit our particular context.

### Adapted Staged Approach

#### **Stages 1 - 2**

A teacher or parent may have concerns about the academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development of a child. The teacher will monitor the pupil and may then, if appropriate, administer screening measures, which could include checklists, profiles, standardised tests and checklists. The class teacher should then draw up a short, simple plan for extra help to be implemented within the normal classroom setting in the relevant areas of learning and/or behavioural management. The success of the classroom support plan should be reviewed regularly, with appropriate parental involvement.

If further intervention is considered necessary the pupil will be referred to LS/SEN coordinator and additional learning or emotional/behavioural support given one to one or in a group with a Support Teacher/ Teachers. Parents will be consulted and included in the learning plan. If significant concerns remain after a number of reviews, it may be necessary to provide interventions at stage three. In some cases it may be more obvious that pupils need to move directly from stage one to stage three.

#### **Stage 3**

If a child has an assessed SEN they will be at stage three on entry to school. Children with assessed or emerging complex needs e.g. Autism, may already be supported by the School Age Disability Team located in North Great Georges Street.

### Referrals

Some pupils with emerging needs who require more significant intervention may be referred for further assessment while in our school. Advice will be requested from a NEPS psychologist assigned to our school. When a NEPS psychologist is not assigned, as is currently the case (2015-2016), with NEPS permission, we may commission two assessments yearly from a private practitioner under the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA). This is the recommended option for children who may have specific or general learning difficulties and may also be availed of for cognitive assessments of children with assessed speech and language difficulties who may qualify for Resource Teacher hours under circular 02/05.

Depending on the needs of the child another available option with parental agreement is to refer the child for assessment to relevant HSE professionals e.g. speech and language therapy, psychology and occupational therapy. This is done by completing a Primary Care Team (PCT) referral form with parents. Where appropriate PCT may refer a child on to the School Age Disability Team or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

If a child has or may have a disability parents themselves may request an HSE Assessment of Need via their GP/HSE or have their child assessed privately.

**Note:** If a parent is not in agreement with the school's recommendation for onward referral the Principal will meet with and advice parents and record the outcome of the discussion/decision.

### **Individual Education Plans (IEPs)**

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is usually devised for children at Stage Three with low incidence disability who have been allocated Resource Teaching hours. This is a written document prepared for a named pupil. It is developed through a collaborative process involving the school, parents, the child (where appropriate) and other relevant personnel or agencies. It refers to the adapted or modified aspects of the educational programme and focuses on priority learning needs, although the pupil may also have other learning needs that will not require the same degree of planning or monitoring.

While it is not yet a legal requirement to produce an IEP the school devises and implements IEPs as it is considered best practice to do so. We recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children. They will be consulted at every stage of the IEP process. Formal IEP meetings will be held in end September/early October and May /June and progress towards targets will be reviewed by CTs/RTs mid year.

Meetings are usually organised and chaired by the LS/SEN coordinator and are attended by the Parents, CT, RT and SNA. The Principal and outside professionals may also attend. At the meeting all participants are invited to contribute and discussion and recording focuses on

- ✚ The child's current strengths and challenges.
- ✚ The nature and degree of the child's special educational needs and how those needs affect his /her educational development.
- ✚ The special education and related support services to be provided to the child.
- ✚ The present level of educational performance of the child.
- ✚ Identifying priority learning needs.
- ✚ The setting and review of targets in identified priority areas that the child is to achieve over a period not exceeding twelve months.

In general the RT working with the child will draft the new agreed IEP in consultation with the CT and the support of the LS/SEN coordinator. This will be shared with the Principal. A copy of the IEP is given to Parents and a copy kept on file by the LS/ SEN coordinator.

### **Inclusion**

The school promotes the inclusion of all our pupils in the life of the school and all areas of the curriculum. Every effort is made to ensure that when timetabling for the withdrawal of pupils from the classroom that pupils do not regularly miss one area of the curriculum. This school firmly believes that every child has the right to access all areas of the curriculum and every effort will be made to ensure the curriculum is adapted to cater for all children. The acceptance of all pupils is promoted through the SPHE curriculum taught on a regular basis.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Catering for pupils with learning difficulties and SEN is a collaborative responsibility shared by all: Parents/Guardians, Board of Management, Principal, Class Teachers, Support Teachers, HSCL teachers, Special Needs Assistants and pupils.

### **Board of Management**

The Board of Management:

- ✚ Oversees the development, implementation and review of the school policy for LS/SEN.
- ✚ Ensures that adequate classroom accommodation and learning resources are provided to the school.
- ✚ Provides a secure facility for the storage of LS/SEN records and confidential reports

## Parents

Parents have a vital role in ensuring the success of additional teaching provided to their child. We welcome parents into our school to discuss their concerns in relation to their children's educational needs.

Specifically parents contribute by:

- # Fostering positive attitudes towards school and learning in their child.
- # Communicating regularly with the Class Teacher and Support Teachers.
- # Creating a home environment where literacy can thrive.
- # Visiting the local library.
- # Encouraging good oral language skills in their child.
- # Using day to day situations to develop their child's mathematics skills
- # Reminding children re IEP targets at home e.g. specific behaviour, using specific language

## Principal

The Principal:

- # Has overall responsibility and oversees the implementation and review of this policy.
- # Oversees the implementation of whole school assessment and screening programmes to identify pupils with very low achievement and /or learning difficulties.
- # Monitors the selection of pupils for additional teaching ensuring that these services are focused on the pupils with very low achievement.
- # Initiates referrals to outside agencies in consultation with parents and the LS/SEN coordinator.
- # Liaises with parents of pupils with SEN prior to their entry to school, and organises the necessary supports for successful integration.
- # Applies for necessary resources to the SENO.
- # Keeps teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed in initiating referrals.
- # Facilitates communication between Class Teachers, Support Teachers, parents and external agencies.
- # Supports the professional development of teachers.

## Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for:

- # The progress of all the children in her/his class including those with SEN.
- # Planning and implementation of whole school literacy and numeracy policies.
- # Early identification of pupils with learning difficulties.
- # Differentiating the class curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils within the class.
- # Initiating conversations and making parents aware of the concerns of the school about their child's progress.
- # Drawing up a simple plan for children at Stage One on the Continuum of Support.
- # Collaborating with the Resource Teacher, LS/SEN coordinator and parents in the development and implementation of an IEP.
- # Carry out appropriate screening tests at agreed times of the year.
- # Monitor pupil's progress once they no longer receive additional support.

## LS/SEN Coordinator

The Deputy Principal is responsible for coordinating the provision of SEN/LS education in our school and:

- # Co-ordinates timetabling in consultation with the Principal and all staff to maximise the learning opportunities for children with EN.



- # Meets at least twice yearly with each class teacher to discuss concerns about children's learning. In May/ June pupils are identified for additional support in the following school year.
- # Liaises with all staff regarding children with EN and ensures that they have access to confidential reports where appropriate.
- # Liaises with parents about their child's EN.
- # Liaises with outside agencies including Psychologists/Speech Therapists/Occupational Therapists/SENOs etc.
- # Keeps appropriate records and ensures that confidential reports and records are stored securely.
- # Communicates regularly with the Principal in relation to LS/SEN.
- # Initiates the writing and implementing of IEPs where needed for children with allocated Resource Hours in conjunction with CT, RT and SNA.

### Support Team

The Support Team consists of the Principal, EN coordinator and Support Teachers and:

- # Meets regularly with the Principal to discuss and monitor the organisation of Support Teaching in the school.
- # Addresses any issues regarding timetabling and assessment.
- # Discusses any concerns that arise in relation to continuing/discontinuing pupils receiving additional support.
- # Discusses possible onward referrals to outside agencies with parental agreement.

### Learning Support/Resource/Support Teachers

Learning Support/Resource Teachers:

- # Plan for and provide supplementary teaching in a variety of settings to best meet the needs of individual children.
- # Collaborate with the class teacher, principal and parents on an ongoing basis in the development and implementation of IEPs.
- # Carry out diagnostic testing.
- # Liaise with relevant professionals in consultation with the principal – e.g. psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists.
- # Maintain records and monitor ongoing progress.
- # Meet and advise parents when necessary, accompanied by the class teacher, as necessary.
- # Develop early intervention programmes in oral language, early literacy, maths language and motor skills in consultation with class teachers.
- # Liaise together and co-ordinate resources and agree future needs.
- # Advise and support class teachers about adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, suitable text books, use of information Technology (IT), suitable software and materials useful in the classroom.
- # **Contribute to the development of policy on SEN/LS at the whole school level.**
- # Keep up to date with the latest research and findings on specific learning difficulties and special needs.

### Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator

The Home School Community Liaison Teacher:

- # Liaises with teachers in the identification of parents' needs in order to keep the parents close to their children's learning.
- # Supports parents through home visits and making links with local after-school clubs.
- # Provides parents with information on accessing support services and literacy and numeracy adult education programmes in their local area.
- # Promotes equality of access and participation.

- ✚ Organises in class early literacy and numeracy programmes for children and parents including 'Maths for Fun' and 'Kids Talk'

### Special Needs Assistants

The Special Needs Assistants will:

- ✚ Assist in ensuring the care and safety of the pupil with SEN they are assigned to.
- ✚ Assist the class teacher in helping the child access the full curriculum.
- ✚ Attend IEP meetings and have the opportunity to contribute at the writing and review stage.
- ✚ Work in collaboration with the class teacher, resource teacher, Principal, EN Coordinator and parents in implementing the IEP.
- ✚ Carry out duties assigned to them as per Circular 07/02.

### Pupils

Children who receive additional teaching will contribute to the evaluation of their progress at a level appropriate to their age and ability.

### Transfer

At the end of First Class most children will transfer to second class in the Central Model Senior School or other schools. To assist in the smooth transition of pupils and information the SEN/LS coordinator fills in a Transfer of Information form for any pupil with assessed SEN transferring from this school. With parental permission copies of confidential professional reports and IEPs are given to the Principal. Teaching staff in our school are available before and after transfer to discuss individual children's needs with Central Model Senior School teachers and welcome the opportunity to do so.

### Resources

The Principal and the Board of Management will ensure that a variety of appropriate materials including textbooks, library books, ancillary materials, teaching equipment and oral language developmental materials are available to the RT/LS teachers.

It is the responsibility of the RT/LS teachers in consultation with the Principal coordinator to organise and purchase suitable screening tests and diagnostic materials, phonological and reading materials. RT/LT resources will be used primarily in RT/LS rooms and may be made available to class teachers following consultation with the RT/LS teachers.

The LS/SEN coordinator is currently responsible for purchasing and organising levelled reading schemes for all teachers to use in the school.

### Record Keeping

Each teacher will maintain their own records containing relevant information pertaining to each pupil. Referrals to outside agencies and psychological reports are kept in a locked filing cabinet in the LS/SEN coordinator's room. All relevant persons involved with meeting the pupil's needs on a regular basis may contribute to these files. These files may contain records of communication, psychological reports, speech and language reports, screening and diagnostic assessments, work samples and IEPs. The principal, class teacher, learning support/resource teacher, psychologists, school inspector and parents/guardians may have access to these files. Access is on a 'need to know' basis.

### Success Criteria

The success criteria policy will be judged by:

- ✚ Enhanced parental involvement in supporting their child's needs.
- ✚ Increased parental awareness of their child's ability and progress through regular contact with the school.

- ✚ Increased opportunities for effective communication and team work in the school in relation to the pupil's progress.
- ✚ The standards of literacy and numeracy improving in the school enabling the discontinuation of the supplementary teaching based on positive assessment results.
- ✚ Well motivated pupils becoming aware of their own learning targets.
- ✚ Pupils developing independent learning skills appropriate to their age and ability.

### **Timeframe for Implementation**

This revised Special Educational Needs Policy will be implemented in September 2016 following Board of Management ratification.

### **Responsibility and Timeframe for Review**

The Principal and In School Management Team will review this policy as part of the annual Whole School Review.

### **The policy was agreed by teachers**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_

