

Learning Support Policy

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Oylegate NS

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Introduction

Oylegate National School is a co-educational primary school from infants to sixth class, under the patronage of the Bishop of Ferns. It is a mainstream rural school, catering for a cross section of children.

The purpose of this SEN policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other interested parties on the provision of effective learning support to pupils experiencing low achievement and or learning difficulties, as well as to fulfill our obligations under the Education Act 1998.

Oylegate N.S. currently has the following provisions to cater for children with Special Education Needs:

One full time Learning Support Teacher.

Two full time Resource Teachers for children with Low Incidence disabilities.

One part time Resource Teacher for children with Low Incidence disabilities.

Access to and participation in the above facilities is governed by the following policies:

Resource Teaching Policy

Learning Support Policy

Implementation and Review

The implementation of this policy will commence in April'11. It will be reviewed thereafter at the end of every third school year, or as circumstances may warrant.

Communication

This policy will be available from the school office. School policies will also be disseminated to the parents through the school's newsletter, website and through the Parent's Council.

Learning Support Policy

The principal aim of Learning Support is to optimize the teaching and learning process so as to enable 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.

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.

Facilitate early intervention and prevention of learning difficulties.

Endeavour to utilize a child's individual strengths in order to help him/her to reach their full potential.

Guiding Principles

The school recognizes that effective learning programmes are based on the following principles:

Effective whole-school policies.

Whole school involvement.

Prevention of failure at infant level.

Provision of intensive early intervention up to and including second class

Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need.

Prevention Strategies

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 development. Structured programme of phonological awareness - Jolly Phonics is used in the lower classes, PAT throughout the school especially with children in receipt of Learning Support and Spellbound is used in the higher classes.

A strong emphasis is placed on oral language. The Chatterbox Programme is used in the school.

Different genres of writing are used to encourage our children to write, including both functional and creative forms. There is an emphasis on the process of writing.

A structured programme in spelling is used. Most classes are using Spellbound. Pupils have weekly spelling tests. These tests are differentiated for the pupils with special educational needs as appropriate e.g. children with dyslexia may be invited to do their test orally.

An environment supportive of spelling is encouraged - word lists about the classrooms, labels and signs throughout the school, the usage of personal dictionaries.

I.C.T. programmes are in place to support the weaker spellers. These include

Star Spell, Scoilnet Phonics and Spelling Games and Word Shark.

A variety of reading materials is supplied in the classroom and learning support libraries to accommodate reading ability and reading preferences.

The development and implementation of agreed whole school approaches to the teaching of aspects of maths e.g. whole school approach to the language of tables and subtraction.

Promotion of parental understanding and involvement through the arrangement of formal and informal Parent Teacher meetings, provision of regular newsletters as well as ongoing collaboration with the Parents Council.

Paired Reading Programme from infants to sixth class in the last term.

DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) Programme is ongoing in the school.

Early intervention in Junior Infants and Senior Infants.

Ongoing observation and assessment of pupils by class teacher.

Staged Approach to Learning Support.

Our approach to Learning Support is a staged one.

Stage 1

A class teacher may have concerns about the academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development of certain pupils. The teacher will then administer screening measures which may include screening checklists or standardized tests for older children. The class teacher will then draw up a short, simple plan for extra help within the normal classroom setting within the relevant areas of learning and / or behaviour management. The success of the plan will be reviewed on a regular basis with appropriate parental involvement. If concern remains after approximately 2 terms the Special Education Support Team will be consulted about the desirability of a move to stage 2.

Stage 2

In the case of children with learning difficulties if the class teacher's plan fails to achieve the desired outcome then the child should be referred to the Learning Support teacher with parental permission for further diagnostic testing. If results indicate that supplementary teaching would be beneficial then this should be arranged. Parents and class teacher will be involved with the Learning Support teacher in drawing plan. Progress will be reviewed regularly. If significant concerns remain after a period of at least one school term then it may be necessary to implement Stage 3.

In the case of children with emotional or behavioural difficulties it is recognized that, with serious difficulties, more urgent action may be needed. In these cases the child's needs should, with parental permission, be discussed with the relevant N.E.P.S. psychologist or referred to the clinical services of the Health

Board.

This may lead to a more detailed plan of behavioural management at home, in class, and or referral for further specialist assessment (Stage 3)

Stage 3

At this stage the school formally requests a consultation with and, where appropriate, an assessment of need from a specialist outside the school in respect of children with learning difficulties or mild/moderate behavioural problems who have failed to make progress after being given supplementary teaching as behavioural management programmes. Such specialist advice may be sought from psychologists, paediatricians, speech and language therapists etc. The parents will be consulted throughout the process.

Criteria For Selection Of Pupils For NEPS Assessment.

Due to the fact that access to NEPS assessments is limited the following criteria will be taken into account in the selection of pupils to avail of this service:

Recommendations from agencies outside the school e.g. speech therapists, occupational therapists, clinical psychologists etc. that an educational assessment be carried out on a particular child.

The presence of significant care needs.

The presence of significant educational needs.

The age of the child in question in accordance with the principles of Early Intervention.

Referral To Out Of School Agencies.

The Principal , Class Teacher and Learning Support Teacher co-ordinate the referral of pupils to outside agencies e.g. educational psychologist , speech therapist , occupational therapist

The Principal and/or class teacher and/or Learning Support teacher meet with the parents/guardians to discuss the need for the referral and to seek consent.

Parents give a contribution towards the cost of referral to outside agencies at their own discretion.

The class teacher and/or learning support teacher completes the necessary forms in consultation with the appropriate school personnel.

The external professional may visit the school to meet with the pupil, parent / guardian, principal, class teacher and learning support teacher as appropriate and the assessment is conducted. (The assessment may also be conducted outside school time)

The assessment is usually followed by a return visit, where possible, at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate

response is agreed.

Where an assessment is carried out outside school a report is usually sent to the principal and, if the parents agree, may be given to the learning support teacher. This will result in a meeting with the teachers concerned where an appropriate response is agreed.

Selection of Pupils for Learning Support

The principle of Early Intervention applies; therefore pupils from Junior Infants to Second Class are given priority in the allocation of Learning Support.

Class teacher may check the enrolment form of a child to ascertain if he/she has a medical history/condition that would impair learning.

In Junior Infants pupils are screened using teacher observation, checklists. The Belfield Infant Assessment Profile is carried out on all junior infant pupils in the second term and those children who fall below the critical score in two or more categories are prioritised for Learning Support in accordance with the principle of Early Intervention.

From Senior Infants upwards pupils are screened annually, using appropriate Standardised Tests (MIST, Micra-T, Sigma-T)

Children in Senior Infants whose scores in the MIST indicate that they require support are given access to Learning Support .

Priority for Learning Support from first class onwards is given to those pupils who perform at or below the 10th percentile in literacy or maths excluding the pupils who have met the criterion for Resource Teaching.

In the case of pupils performing at or below the 10th percentile in literacy or maths the screening process is followed by a consultative meeting between the class teacher and the parent concerning the pupil's performance. Supplementary teaching is offered.

Children who have a psychological assessment indicating a diagnosis of mild general learning disability given supplementary teaching under the general allocation model.

Children with particular educational or behavioural difficulties who are awaiting assessment by outside agencies will be given access to supplementary teaching

Screening of pupils - Oylegate N.S.

ç Reading

Micra T tests are administered in November each year by the class teacher and scored by the Learning Support teacher.

M.I.S.T. is administered to all Senior Infants each February.

Junior Infants are observed by the class teacher throughout the year. The Belfield Infant Assessment Profile is administered by the Learning Support teacher to all Junior Infant children in the second term .

¢ Maths

The Sigma T is administered to all pupils by the class teacher and scored by the Learning Support Teacher in May each year.

¢ I.Q. Scores

The N.R.I.T. is administered to all children in second and fourth class in September each year,

Priority Allocation of Pupils

In the allocation of places for Learning Support the following are prioritized;

1. Children who have an educational assessment indicating that they have a mild or borderline general learning disability.
2. Children awaiting assessment by outside agencies who are experiencing significant educational or behavioural difficulties.
3. Junior Infants who fall below critical score in two or more areas of BIAP.
4. Senior Infants based on MIST scores.
5. Children from first class who score below the 10th percentile in maths or literacy.
6. Children from second class who score below the 10th percentile in maths or literacy.
7. Children from third class who score below the 10th percentile in maths or literacy.
8. Children from fourth class who score below the 10th percentile in maths or literacy.
9. Children from fifth class who score below the 10th percentile in maths or literacy.
10. Children from sixth class who score below the 10th percentile in maths or literacy.

Provision of Supplementary Teaching

The Primary work of the LS teacher is the provision of Supplementary Teaching to the pupils identified above.

The maximum case load at any one time shall be 30 pupils

Having been selected for Supplementary Teaching and with the consent of the child's parent/guardian, the LS teacher will test the child using the Quest Diagnostic Kit.

The LS teacher in consultation with the class teacher and Principal will draw up the child's IEP.

The LS teacher will meet with the child's parent/guardian to discuss and finalize this plan.

One to one teaching may be provided where small group teaching has not been effective.

Classes will be intensive in terms of frequency

A system of withdrawal and/or in-class support will operate in response to the individual needs of the pupil.

IEP

The IEP will be in accordance with the pro-forma as advised in the Learning Support Guidelines, issued by the DES in 2000.

The plan will address the pupil's full range of needs and will include:

- ¢ Details from the Class teacher
- ¢ Results of Screening Tests
- ¢ Results of Diagnostic Tests
- ¢ Information regarding any involvement of outside agencies
- ¢ Learning Strengths and Attainments
- ¢ Priority Learning Needs
- ¢ Learning Targets
- ¢ Supplementary support activities to include ICT
- ¢ Home and Class based support activities

Each plan will be monitored through teacher observation, the keeping of planning and progress records and through the pupil's own feedback

A detailed review will take place at the end of the school year. The LS Teacher and/or the Class teacher may meet with the parent/guardian to discuss the child's progress in light of the review.

Timetabling

¢ The provision of Learning Support is in addition to the regular class teaching in English and Maths .

¢ Every effort is made to ensure that pupils do not miss on the same curricular area each time they attend learning support. A flexible approach to timetabling is adopted by the Class teacher, though class disruption must be minimized.

¢ The provision of Learning Support may include withdrawal of pupils from their classroom and/or in-class tuition.

¢ In class support, if appropriate, will be jointly designed and monitored by the Class teacher and Learning Support teacher.

¢ Children are taught in groups of 2/3.

¢ The time per class is normally 30 minutes per day.

¢ Learning Support and classroom teachers communicate orally or in writing in relation to planning and progress of the children in their charge.

¢ Learning Support classes are conducted either in the Learning Support Classroom or in a small section of the classroom.

Learning Support in the classroom.

¢ When necessary or when requested by the class teacher the Learning Support teacher works with small groups in the classroom setting.

¢ The Learning Support teacher also works in the classroom in an observational capacity.

¢ The Learning Support teacher may work in each classroom in the second and third term for an agreed time block e.g. 1x half hour session per week for a six week period or 1 x half hour session per day for 1 - 2 weeks. The programme to be followed is agreed by the class teacher and the Learning Support teacher and is dictated by the perceived need of each particular class grouping e.g. extra phonics work - blending / silent letters etc. / language enrichment / dictionary skills / creative writing / functional writing or any other area of concern for the class teacher.

Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching

o In general children should not stay for more than 2/3 years in Supplementary Teaching unless they are at or below the 4th percentile.

o Following the end of their instructional term as detailed in their IEP a decision is made to continue or discontinue the provision of Supplementary teaching.

o The decision making process involves consultation between the Class teacher, the Learning Support teacher and the pupil's parents. Account is also taken of the overall Learning Support demand in the school.

The criteria on which the decision will be made include;

1. A consideration as to whether the pupil has achieved some/all of the learning targets set

2. Improvement on Standardised Test scores which move the child above the 4th percentile

3. A consideration as to whether the child will be able to cope independently/semi-independently in the classroom learning context.

4. The overall Learning Support demand in the school.

o A decision to continue the provision of supplementary teaching will result in the revision of the pupil's IEP.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Learning Support is a collaborative responsibility shared by all partners in the

learning experiences. It is important that all partners contribute to the planning and implementation of our school plan on Learning Support.

Board of Management

The role of the BOM is to:

Oversee the development, implementation and review of the provision of Learning Support in the school.

Ensure adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the Learning Support Teachers

Provide a secure facility for the storage of records in relation to pupils in receipt of Learning Support.

Budget for ongoing support for Professional Development in Learning Support for staff.

Principal

The role of the Principal is to:

Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policy on Learning Support in co-operation with the BOM, teachers, Parents and children.

Work with Parents and Teachers in the development of the school plan on Learning Support in the context of Special Needs Education.

Monitor the implementation of the school plan on Learning Support on an ongoing basis

Monitor the selection of children for Supplementary Teaching ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with the lowest levels of achievement.

Assume direct responsibility for co-coordinating Learning Support in the context of Special Needs Services. Assistance with this task may be delegated to a post holder on the ISM (In-School Management) team.

Oversee the implementation of a Whole-School Assessment and Screening Programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need.

Keep teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedure to be followed in initial referrals.

Help teachers increase their knowledge and skills in the area of Learning Support.

Class Teacher

The Class Teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in his/her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching. In supporting the development and implementation of the school plan on Learning Support, the Class Teacher should:

Implement teaching programmes which optimize the learning of all pupils and

to the greatest possible extent prevent the emergence of learning difficulties.
Implement the school's policies on screening and selecting of pupils for supplementary teaching in English and Maths by co-operating and assisting with the administration and scoring of appropriate screening measures

For each pupil who is in receipt of Supplementary teaching, to collaborate with the Learning Support Teacher in the development of an IEP by identifying the appropriate learning targets and by organizing classroom activities to achieve these targets.

For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, to adjust the classroom programme in line with the agreed learning targets and activities

When required a termly plan of work in English and Maths to be provided to the Learning Support Teacher in advance.

Learning Support Teacher

The role of the Learning Support Teacher is to:

Develop an IEP for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with the Class Teacher and Parents.

Maintain planning and progress record or equivalent for each pupil in receipt of Learning Support.

Provide teaching in English and Maths to pupils in the school who experience low achievement, in accordance with the school's selection criterion.

Contribute to the development of Policy on Learning Support at Whole School Level.

Provide advice to class teacher in such areas as individual pupil's assessment and programme planning as well as approaches to language development, reading, writing, and mathematics for pupils experiencing difficulties.

Communicate with parents with regard to their child's needs and progress.

Formal parent-teacher meetings will take place in the first term each year.

Meetings will also be held with parents to discuss BIAP and MIST results. This also applies should the results of children in the Micra-T and Sigma - T warrant it .IEP meetings will be held with all parents of children attending Learning Support and reviews will follow on the review dates specified in each IEP .

Should the Learning Support teacher or the parents wish to meet outside the times referred to above such meetings are facilitated at a mutually agreed time.

Contribute at school level to decision making regarding the purchase of Learning resource books and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classes and in the Learning Support room.

Support the Principal to perform a defined role in coordinating the provision of Special Needs and Learning Support services in the school.

Maintain a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and special education support.

Track the progress of pupils who have discontinued Learning Support.

In early June the LS teacher may set aside a week specifically for collaboration with the class teacher and parents. Other informal collaboration will take place during the school year when required.

Parents

The role of parents supporting the Learning Support for their children is vital to its success. Specifically parents contribute through:

Regular communication with the Class Teacher and the Learning Support Teacher.

Creating a home environment where literacy can thrive.

Fostering positive attitudes about school and learning in the child.

Participation in shared reading programme.

Encouraging the child to visit the library.

Developing the child's oral language

Developing the child's social maths.

Having an input into their child's IEP.

Pupils

The involvement of pupils developing, implementing and reviewing their own learning programme is important for them to become independent learners.

Pupils attending Learning Support will learn to take responsibility for their own learning as appropriate with reference to age and learning difficulties:

¢ By selecting their own reading material that is relevant to attaining their learning targets.

¢ By applying learning strategies taught during Learning Support teaching to the classroom environment.

¢ By evaluating and self - assessing their own work.

¢ By becoming familiar with short - term targets that have been set for them and setting their own targets where appropriate.

Success Criteria

The school wide implementation of this policy will result in enhancement of pupils learning in the following ways:

Improved standards of academic achievement with the pupil's individual learning programme.

Enabling the discontinuation of the provision of Learning Support based on positive assessment results.

Enhanced parental involvement in supporting their child's learning needs.

Increased opportunities for effective communication between school personnel

in relation to the child's progress.

Learning Support provision continuously focused on children from Junior Infants to Second Class.