

**St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School,  
Greystones, Co. Wicklow**

**School policy on Special Educational Needs**

**This Document was ratified by the Board of Management on  
12<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

## **School Mission Statement**

St. David's is a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School. We aim as a school community to be witnesses to the Gospel values, by our work, by our dealings with all those who make up the large school community, by our words and actions, we constantly strive to model ourselves on Jesus, the teacher, who taught with gentleness yet authority. Each student is valued for his/her unique individual talents and gifts. With our varied curriculum, we offer our students many opportunities for learning about themselves and the world around them. We aim to provide an environment where the student can experience psychological, social, personal and spiritual growth. We hope to send out into the world confident young Christians prepared to face the challenges that the world will offer them, with a special place in their hearts for those less fortunate in our society and with the knowledge that they have been cherished as students in our school.

'The future is in the hands of those who give coming generations reasons for living and hoping'

Vatican 2.

## **Introduction**

St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School is a non-fee paying Catholic school for boys and girls. It is situated in Greystones, Co. Wicklow. It is owned and managed by the Le Chéile Schools Trust, assisted by the Board of Management which includes trustee, staff and parental representation.

This policy is based on the religious and educational philosophy of the Holy Faith order and is intended to reflect the desire of the Holy Faith Sisters for their schools to develop and implement progressive, inclusive and student-centred policies for all students including those with special educational needs. The philosophy is that 'of creating a school community whose central purpose is the education and growth of the whole person'.

St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School (now part of the Le Chéile Trust) is constantly striving to be a welcoming and an inclusive school for all. This means the fullest possible inclusion of students with special educational needs. In this regard, the school relies both on its own resources and the active support of government to ensure the needs of the students are provided for.

## **Rationale**

The purpose of this policy is to provide a set of guidelines for the use of additional teaching resources provided by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to support students with special educational needs (SEN). This policy is written in the context of a revised model for allocating Special Education Teaching (SET) resources which was introduced by the DES in September 2017. Effective provision for SEN students in St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School is part of an inclusive whole-school framework which emphasises effective teaching and learning for all students and excellent collaboration between the school, parents/guardians and, most importantly, our students. This policy should be viewed as 'evolving' and should take account of developments in practice as they happen.

## **Legislation and Department of Education Publications**

This policy is fully compliant of legislation pertaining to SEN/SET:

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Equal Status Act (2000)
- The Equality Act (2004)
- The Education Welfare Act (2000)
- The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004)
- Circular No: 0014/2017: Special Education Teaching Allocation
- The Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018

Supporting Publications:

- Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines (DES, 2007)
- Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (DES, 2017)
- Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support – Guidelines for Teachers

## **Whole school approach to SEN**

### **Board of Management**

The overall responsibility for the provision of education for all students including those with SEN lies with the Board. The Board of Management facilitates the inclusion of students with SEN through inclusive enrolment policies and by promoting inclusive whole school policies and procedures. The Board are charged with specific duties in legislation. A summary of these is contained in the Post Primary Guidelines for Inclusion (2007).

## **Principal**

The Principal, through the legislation, has the overall responsibility for establishing and promoting whole school policies and procedures that are supportive of the learning of all students including those with SEN. A summary of these responsibilities are contained in the Post Primary Guidelines on Inclusion.

## **SEN Coordinators**

St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School has two SEN Coordinators, who are post-holders at AP2 level. They have the responsibility for the daily running of the SEN Department. The duties of the SEN Coordinators include:

- Develop and implement a whole school SEN policy under the direction of the Principal
- Lead the provision of support for SEN students
- Consult with parents of SEN students regarding their individual learning needs
- Consult with external agencies to arrange for educational assessments and provision of support for SEN students.
- Facilitate the smooth transition of SEN students from primary schools and other post-primary schools
- Lead the three step process of identification of need, intervention, monitoring and recording of outcomes
- Collaborate with the Principal and the Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) in the allocation resources such as additional teaching hours and Digital Technologies for SEN students
- Arrange for the purchase of appropriate Digital Technologies for SEN students availing of the DES Grant for Assistive Technology
- Liaise with Senior Management on applications for an exemption from the study of Irish for SEN students where necessary

- Collaborate with the Guidance Counsellor to meet the care needs of all students in the school, including SEN students and assist those students experiencing social/emotional difficulties
- Meet with parents of SEN students experiencing learning/social/emotional difficulties
- Collaborate with the Principal in applications for Reasonable Accommodations in the Certificate Examinations (RACE)
- Collaborate with Examinations Secretary and Deputy Principal to organise Reasonable Accommodations in House Examinations
- Collaborate with Principal and Deputy Principal in allocation of support for SEN students on the school timetable
- Collaborate with external agencies, parents and students in the creation of Student Support Files
- Lead and supervise the provision of SNA support for SEN students
- On-going communication of information concerning SEN students to Principal, Deputy Principal and all teachers as required
- Advise Senior Management on individual cases

## **Parents/Guardians**

Parents make a huge contribution to their child's learning. St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School encourages open communication between parents and teachers throughout every student's education.

Parents can prepare for and support the work of the school in the following ways:

- Providing all relevant information and documentation to the school in relation to their child's learning difficulties, learning needs, strengths, and any other concerns they may have. This information will enable the school to begin to plan for the inclusive education of their child. The provision of documentation to the school regarding their child's needs is critical to collaborative planning for their child.
- Parents' play a critical role in the successful creation and implementation of their child's Student Support File.

- Parents are encouraged to communicate freely with the school at any time if they are concerned about their child's education. •
- Parents help the school by keeping teachers informed of their progress of their child, or any difficulties they encounter. •
- Parents can support the work of the school by providing a home environment where there are opportunities for learning.

## **Students**

Students receiving additional support should:

- Have a positive attitude towards participation in their learning.
- Become familiar with their learning targets and be involved in the setting of those targets.
- Contribute to the selection of material relevant to the attainment of these targets.
- Participate fully in all assessments.
- Develop "ownership" of the skills and strategies that are taught as part of the additional support they receive and learn to apply these to improve their own learning.

## **Special Needs Assistant (when allocated)**

The S.N.A. supports the student in school by:

- Assisting the specific student in in the classroom, transitions and during break times, providing personal space and time away when necessary.
- Giving assistance to a student when guided by a teacher
- Assistance with the centres for Reasonable Accommodation in examinations
- Other duties that might support students with SEN

## **The Guidance Counsellor**

The Guidance Counsellor is a key member of the Special Educational Needs Team and has an important role in assisting these students with the different stages of schooling and in helping them make career decisions, cope with transitions, providing emotional support in order that these students will reach their potential.

## **Mainstream teachers**

Mainstream teachers have a key role in bringing about the successful inclusion of students with SEN. The mainstream teacher has the responsibility to ensure all students, including those with SEN, are provided with a learning programme and environment that enables them access the curriculum and to advance their learning. Mainstream teachers have a central role in identifying and referring students who may be at risk to the Special Needs Coordinators, here in St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School.

Mainstream teachers make a critical contribution through the creation of a supportive caring environment in the school for students with SEN, through which these students are affirmed in their ability to learn and to participate generally in the life of the school. Teaching is differentiated in order to meet the individual needs of all students. In planning for differentiation, the mainstream teacher may collaborate with and seek advice from the Special Needs Coordinators. This is best practice.

Teachers in the school are encouraged and supported in attending special education training courses and C.P.D. courses, in order to improve the education provided to students with special needs and to all students.

## **Year Heads and Class tutors**

Year Heads and class tutors support the creation of the inclusive climate within the school by being aware of the student's needs and by monitoring the progress within the year group. Year Heads liaise with the SEN

Coordinators and outside agencies to ensure the needs of all students in their year group are met.

### **A Three-Step Process to Support SEN Students:**

In St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School we will use the DES Continuum of Support framework to engage in a three-step process in identifying and responding to our students' needs. This framework recognises that SEN occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, from transient to long term, and that students require different levels of support depending on their individual needs. Using this framework helps to ensure that interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support and that they are informed by careful monitoring of progress. (DES Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with SEN in Mainstream Schools, p.6)

Provision for students with SEN is based on a whole school approach. The following have key parts to play:

- Board of Management
- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Parents
- Students
- SEN Coordinators
- SEN teachers
- Special Needs Assistants
- Guidance Counsellor
- Year Heads
- Mainstream teachers
- Outside Agencies

#### **Step 1: Identification of Need**

St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School operates a policy of early identification of the needs of SEN students through:

##### *A. Prior to school entry:*

- Enrolment Form: Opportunity for parents to inform us of SEN
- Transition Meetings with Feeder Schools
- CAT4 Test

- Open Day: Conversations with Parents
- Contact with parents if deemed necessary based on CAT4 Results
- Education Passport
- Assessment Reports from external agencies given to us by parents
- Senior Management meeting with every incoming First Year & parent/guardian in April, prior to entry in First Year.

*B. Students with SEN transferring from another post-primary school:*

- Assessment reports and school reports are requested from parents prior to transfer

*C. Upon school entry:*

- Formal Assessment: New Group Reading Test (NGRT) and PDST Maths Competency Test
- Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT4), Diagnostic Reading and Spelling Assessments - where deemed appropriate
- Teacher observations
- Meetings of Principal, Deputy Principal, SEN Coordinators, Guidance Counsellor, SNA, Year Heads, Subject teachers, Parents and students

## **Step 2 – Meeting Needs**

(Special Educational Needs, A Continuum of Support, p.5-35)

Creation of Student Support Files:

- When SEN students are identified through the process outlined above, a Student Support File will be created for each of those students' in response to their individual needs. Where possible Student Support Files will be created through a collaborative process involving some/all of the following - the SEN Coordinators, subject teachers, parents, the student and sometimes, external professionals.
- The Student Support File will allow the SEN Team and Subject Teachers to document progress over time and it will assist us in providing an appropriate level of support to students in line with their level of need.

- Following a period of intervention and review of progress, a decision will be made regarding the appropriate level of support required by the student. This may result in a decision to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or to move to a higher or lower level of support.
- Student Support Plans will set out agreed targets, strategies and a time-frame for review. This will help teachers to differentiate their subject teaching to meet the needs of their students and to set specific targets related to their subject areas.
- Milder, transient needs will be met through classroom based support by the mainstream teacher i.e. differentiation.
- Individualised support will be provided for students with more complex and/or enduring needs (DES Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Students with SEN in Mainstream Schools, p.11 - 12)

SEN occur on a continuum and therefore, the needs of SEN students in St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School will be supported on the basis of a continuum as follows:

### **A. Classroom Support:**

Classroom support will be the most common response to emerging needs – the subject teacher, the student and the parents will discuss the nature of the problem and consider strategies which may be effective.

#### **(i) Actions May Include:**

- Specific classroom strategies
- Individualised teaching methodologies
- Differentiation

#### **(ii) Roles and Responsibilities:**

*The Subject Teacher:*

- Liaises with parents
- Seeks advice from the SEN Team
- Maintains a record of relevant information

*The SEN Coordinators:*

- Provide advice and resources to subject teacher to assist him/her in the development of classroom support

*Senior Management:*

- Note that a Classroom Support process is being implemented

*Other Professionals:*

- Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists etc. may be indirectly involved, offering consultation or advice via the SEN Coordinators

(iii) The Review Process:

- A review of Classroom Support actions may involve the subject teacher, parents and student and should focus on progress made by the student.
- The outcome may be that the student continues to have a Classroom Support Plan, no longer requires a Classroom Support Plan or School Support will be initiated

**B. School Support:**

Where classroom support is not enough to fully meet the student's needs the subject teacher will involve the SEN Coordinators.

Information is gathered through formal and informal assessment and a School Support Plan is created.

(i) Information Gathering and Assessment:

Information gathering will inform the development of a new Support Plan and will be gathered from the following sources:

- SEN referral Form
- Formal Assessment
- Observation of learning style/behaviour
- Parents
- Student
- Subject teachers
- External Professionals

(ii) Planning and Intervention:

A School Support plan will be created which will set out the nature of the student's learning difficulties, define specific learning and behavioural targets and set a timescale for review

The plan will for the most part be implemented within the normal classroom setting and complimented by focused school based intervention programs such as Team Teaching or Small Group Teaching. Home based actions in support of the plan are encouraged in consultation with parents/guardians and students.

The School Support process is co-ordinated by the SEN Coordinators.

(iii) Roles and Responsibilities:

*The Subject Teacher:*

- Consults with the SEN Coordinators and remains responsible for working with the student in the classroom.

*The SEN Coordinators:*

- Consult with teachers, the student and his/her parents in creation of School Support Plan

- Seek advice from external professionals
- Make School Support Plan available to all relevant teachers
- Provide additional support for the student through Team Teaching/Learning Support
- Co-ordinate the review of the School Support Plan
- Maintain a record of relevant information.

*Senior Management:*

- Records decision to implement School Support Plan.

*Other Professionals:*

- Provide advice to SEN Team.

(iv) The Review Process:

The review process will focus on student progress and be informed by the views of the parents, the student, the teachers and the SEN Team.

The outcome may be that the student continues to have a School Support Plan, intervention reverts to Classroom Support or School Support Plus will be initiated.

**C. School Support Plus:**

This process will be initiated if, in reviewing the School Support Plan, it is agreed that the student is not making adequate progress.

If a student's needs are severe and/or persistent the SEN Coordinators will liaise with the student, the parents, the Subject Teachers and personnel outside the school in the assessment and intervention process.

The information from Classroom Support and School Support will provide the starting point for problem solving at this level.

A School Support Plus Plan will be drawn up based on the information gathered.

(i) Roles and Responsibilities:

*The Subject Teacher:*

- Contributes to planning and remains responsible for the student in the classroom
- Provides classroom supports.

*The SEN Coordinators:*

- Review the outcomes of interventions in the Classroom and School Support Plans
- Co-ordinate the assessment of the student's learning/social/emotional difficulties
- Co-ordinate development of School Support Plus Plan in collaboration with the student, parents/guardians, teachers, SEN Teachers, external professionals
- Provide additional support for the student through Team Teaching/Small Group/1:1 Sessions
- Monitor and support interventions
- Review School Support Plus Plan in collaboration with the student, parents, teachers, SEN Team, external professionals, senior school management
- Record the initiation of the school Support Plus process
- Ensure that a file is maintained containing records regarding consent of the involvement of external professionals, the assessment process, interventions, reviews and records of earlier school and classroom support processes.

(ii) The Review Process:

The SEN Team will carry out a review in collaboration with the parents, the student, teachers and external professionals to measure progress.

The outcome will be the continuation or discontinuation of School Support Plus.

### **Step 3 – Monitor and Recording Outcomes**

Students' progress in relation to achieving their targets will be regularly and carefully monitored through the Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus process outlined above.

This will be done through formal and informal assessment and observation and reports from Subject Teachers, year heads, parents and students.

#### **Key Objectives in SEN Planning**

The educational objectives for students with special needs are the same as for all students. Key objectives of particular importance and relevance are:

- Development of self – esteem, essential life skills, and personal sense of competency.
- Functional Literacy & Numeracy
- To be aware of their individual learning strengths/ challenges so that they can continue to pursue their education into the future (life- long learning).
- Success in State Examinations.

#### **Reasonable Accommodation in State Examinations (RACE)**

The S.E.N. co-ordinator applies for reasonable accommodation in State examinations for a number of students with learning difficulties each year. The most commonly used forms are:

- A waiver in spelling and grammar
- Assistance of a reader/reading pen

- Use of a tape recorder/word processor
- Use of a separate centre/shared separate centre.

Students are granted reasonable accommodation in examinations in accordance with the criteria, as outlined by the State Examinations Commission. Parents and students are informed of the fact that the student availed of 'accommodation' and that this is indicated on his/ her results' certificate. Students and their parents/ guardians are informed that reasonable accommodation granted at Junior Certificate Level can be reactivated at Leaving Certificate. Additional information is available from examinations.ie.

### **Record keeping Procedures**

In the interest of security and strict confidentiality these reports are stored in a locked filing cabinet in the SEN Co-ordinator's office. It is school policy that photocopying reports is inappropriate, and that instead reports may be taken and relevant information noted. Sensitive information is handled appropriately in consultation with parents' wishes. St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School, Greystones, is fully compliant with requirements of GDPR.

### **Exemptions**

- If students have an exemption from the study of Irish at primary school, they are exempt from Irish at post-primary level.
- New applicants must apply to the school Principal for an exemption. If students meet the criteria for an exemption from the study of Irish, as per Circular 0053/2019 (which replaces Circular 0010/1994), applications for an exemption are processed. As much as feasible, additional teaching is done during Irish class time.
- Applications for students for exemptions from the third language requirement for NUI are processed by the Guidance Counsellor.

## **Appeals Procedure**

Parents/ Students who are concerned and who wish to discuss or make suggestions about any aspect of educational provision should approach the relevant teacher, tutor, year head or SEN co-ordinator. If an issue is unresolved, a formal letter should be submitted to the Principal. If still unresolved, the issue can be referred to the Board of Management.

Clearly the additional support outlined above is dependent on additional resources and most of these additional resources are granted annually by the NCSE and Department of Education and Skills.

This policy will be reviewed in 2021 (or sooner if the need arises to comply with legislation).

Date of discussion and adoption by the BOM \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson