

East Glendalough School

Special Educational Needs Policy

1. Preamble

The principles of inclusivity and respect are enshrined in the East Glendalough School Statement of Ethos, and are lived out as much as possible in the day-to-day life of the School. The school aims to provide a caring, happy and safe environment, to foster a love of life-long learning and to develop each person's academic, physical, moral, cultural and spiritual potential.

Inherent to this is an understanding that individual needs or learning differences should not prevent a student from flourishing in East Glendalough School. It is our aspiration that if a child is diagnosed as needing support, they will receive whatever assistance they require to enable them to thrive like any other student (subject to this support being resourced by the Department of Education & Skills). This will involve a whole-school approach to supporting the child with individual needs.

This policy is in keeping with the Education Act 1998, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 and The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004

2. Aims

East Glendalough School aims to:

- Give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children who have a disability or who have other special educational needs, as they relate to education.
- Provide, as far as is practicable and having regard to the resources available, a level and quality of education appropriate to the needs and abilities of all students in the school.
- Ensure, as far as is practicable and having regard to the resources available, that students with individual needs are educated in an inclusive environment.
- Affirm that students with special educational needs have the same right to avail of, and benefit from education as students who do not have those needs.
- Provide for the involvement of parents in the education of their children and in the decision making process in relation to their children.
- Co-operate and work closely with the National Council for Special Educational Needs (NCSE) and other agencies with regard to the education of students with special educational needs.
- Ensure that students with special educational needs are identified and provided for in a fair and equitable manner so that their learning potential and their sense of self worth and dignity is developed and respected.
- Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the individual needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.

- Ensure that special educational needs is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole School and community.
- Ensure that students with individual needs are offered a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Set high standards for students with special educational needs and provide them with appropriate guidance, encouraging them to achieve to their full potential.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support in school and at home.
- Co-ordinate the advice, guidance and support of other agencies in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Ensure the effective and efficient use of resources.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of practice in support of students with special educational needs.
- Provide, as far as is practicable and having regard to the resources available, access to educational facilities for students who have a physical disability.

3. The Student

Students attending East Glendalough School will have a variety of individual needs. These may include (but are not restricted to):

- Physical Disability/Illness
eg. hearing impairment, wheelchair user, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, etc
 - Emotional/Behavioural Problems
These typically present in three ways:
 1. ADHD (*these are NOT “bold” children, and with the right support and/or medication can thrive in a “mainstream” school*)
 2. Anxiety
 3. Depression.*However, other disorders can apply.*
 - Specific Learning Disability
Dyslexia – difficulties with reading, writing, comprehension
Hyperlexia – difficulties with comprehension
Dyscalculia – difficulties with calculations
Dysgraphia – difficulties with writing
DCD/Dyspraxia – difficulties with co-ordination and writing
 - General Learning Disability
While children with Mild, Moderate or Profound GLD will probably require special schooling, others with Borderline GLD (an IQ of 70-79) can cope very well in a mainstream setting such as East Glendalough School.
 - Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD)
Autism is a condition that involves with difficulties with
 1. Social Interaction
 2. Language and Communication
 3. Behavioural Patterns.*The idea of a “spectrum” is that most people exhibit traits of autism – just having one or two doesn’t mean a child has autism.*
Asperger’s Syndrome – children with this form of autism are often very high-functioning and can cope very well in a mainstream setting.ⁱ
- Note: Many ASD students can cope fine with typical SEN support. An “ASD Unit” is sometimes offered for students who have more complex needs. However, plenty of ASD students do not require such a unit and just because a child has such a diagnosis doesn’t mean they will automatically qualify for a place in one.*
- Speech and Language difficulties
“When a person is unable to produce speech sounds correctly or fluently, or has problems with his or her voice, then he or she has a speech disorder. Difficulties pronouncing sounds, or articulation disorders, and stuttering are examples of speech disorders. When a person has trouble understanding others (receptive language), or sharing thoughts, ideas, and

ⁱ It is important to note that the DSM-5 has eliminated the term *Asperger’s Syndrome*, but that the ICD-10 has not.

feelings completely (expressive language), then he or she has a language disorder. A stroke can result in aphasia, or a language disorder. Both children and adults can have speech and language disorders. They can occur as a result of a medical problem or have no known cause”ⁱⁱ

NOTE: One other “Special Need” is Giftedness. Gifted students can also find secondary education extremely very stressful or distressing and may struggle to fit in. East Glendalough School will also endeavour to address the needs of particularly able students, using tactics such as differentiated teaching styles and other support where deemed necessary.

4. The Special Educational Needs Department – People Involved

Ultimate responsibility for the education of children with individual needs in East Glendalough School rests with the Board of Management. The Board, and the Principal acting on its behalf, will monitor implementation of the SEN programme on an ongoing basis to ensure best practice, will promote a whole-school approach to special educational provision and will also appoint various staff to operate the programme.

Duties include, but are not limited to

- Teach support classes to students in withdrawal groups or and one-on-one
- May provide in-class support for literacy and numeracy
- Scheduling ASN class timetables
- Liaise with parents and subject teachers on progress of ASN students
- Circulate information to staff
- Implement IEPs/student passports
- Administer necessary assessments
- DARE/RACE applications

Role of additional teachers

Additional subject teachers may teach support classes. These classes are assigned to teachers based on subjects and the needs of students.

Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school’s policies on Special Needs and Learning Support. He/she will sanction exemption from certain subjects as requested, ensure adequate timetabling of hours for learning support, resource and non-national support as well as facilitating meetings of, and inservice training for, the SEN Department staff.

Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)

The Special Educational Needs Coordinator will have overall responsibility for management of the daily operations of the Learning Support/SEN Department. Duties attached to the post include:

- Organisation of Irish Exemptions

ⁱⁱ <http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders>

- Coordination of staff to complete Individual Education Plans (IEPs)ⁱⁱⁱ
- Management of applications for Reasonable Accommodations in SEC examinations
- Management of staffing for internal East Glendalough School examinations
- Coordination of the collection of assessments of incoming students and working with parents and feeder schools to identify students with special needs.
- Liaison with the Principal in the allocation and timetabling of students to classes and the allocation of students to individual Learning Support teachers.
- Submission of NCSE forms.
- Liaison with external service providers i.e NEPS (including organisation of psychological assessments), SENO, H.S.E.
- Management of Special Needs Assistants.
- Ongoing communication of information concerning SEN pupils to Principal and staff as required
- Organisation of meetings and case conferences with parents and relevant external agencies as required

These duties are reviewed regularly and may change to ensure the priority needs of the SEN Department are met.

Special Educational Needs/Resource Teachers

A team of staff will teach individual and small groups of students requiring learning support. They will develop IEPs for these students. They will offer advice to subject teachers and other departments on employing differentiated teaching methods and resources in their subject teaching and they will liaise with external agencies if requested to do so by management or the SENCO.

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

Dependant on an allocation being granted by the Department of Education & Skills, a small team of staff will cater for the care needs and particular difficulties of some students. They will provide assistance as required, which could also be in the area of student organisation, extra-curricular activities, helping teachers in the supervision of SEN pupils, or helping pupils to become more independent and self-reliant. They will also carry out duties as assigned by the Principal in accordance with DES Circular 10/76.

Subject Teachers

The academic progress of students throughout the school rests in the first instance with the subject teachers. Subject teachers are required to be aware of the School's policy and procedures (as outlined in this document) for dealing with students with individual needs and learning differences and are encouraged to:

- Seek advice from the SEN Department regarding students with individual needs and learning differences in their classes and bring any concerns regarding students to the relevant personnel
- Take account of the needs and learning styles of all their students and employ suitable teaching methods so that all students can access the curriculum at the appropriate level
- Take responsibility for their own continuous professional development, particularly with regard to common difficulties e.g. Dyslexia & Specific Language difficulties

ⁱⁱⁱ IEPs are written documents prepared for named students which specify the learning goals to be achieved by the student over a set period along with the teaching strategies, resources and supports necessary to achieve these goals (NCSE, 2006).

- Develop an attitude of ownership to the education of students in their classes with individual needs and learning differences
- Where a student has an SNA the subject teacher should plan how to most effectively engage the SNA in consultation with the SENCO and with regard to the directions of the SENCO.

Pastoral Care Teachers

Teachers involved in the Pastoral Care Department will participate in the SEN programme in the School, working with the SEN teachers on an ongoing basis to provide supports and services to the relevant students.

Parents ^{iv}

The effectiveness of any assessment or intervention will be crucially influenced by the involvement of the child's parents.

- At the Induction Day/Evening, information on SEN provision in the School is provided to parents. Throughout the year further updates and details will be communicated to parents. In return, parents are expected to keep the SENCO or relevant teachers updated with developments from their perspective and to work closely with the SEN staff to make their child's learning experience as positive as possible.
- Parents are invited to contact the Learning Support Department during the year in addition to meeting the Learning Support teachers at Parent/Teacher Meetings.
- Parents are always contacted if a student is to be referred for assessment and afterwards to discuss the outcome of the assessment.
- Parents are expected to support the work of the school with the student and to ensure the correct use and maintenance of any aids or equipment that are provided for the student.

Students

The students themselves are the other crucial link in the chain. They are expected to contribute to the drawing up of learning programmes and the setting of learning targets for themselves, to contribute to the review of these programmes and to participate wholeheartedly in them.

5. Identifying Students with Individual Needs and Learning Differences

a. i Access to Resource Classes

The following groups of students qualify for Resource class support in the school:

- Students who have had a psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support/Resource teaching, and who have been granted resource hours in either the high or low incidence categories.

a. ii Access to Learning Support

The following groups of students qualify for Learning Support classes in the school:

^{iv} Where the word "parent" is used, it is understood to refer also to "guardian" if appropriate.

- Students who have a psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support, but who have not been granted resource hours will be accommodated in Learning Support or subject support groupings.
- During the school year students may be accommodated within existing groupings, subject to resources being available, if it is found they meet the NCSE criteria for support.

Students who have a psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support, but who have not been granted resource hours will be accommodated in Learning Support or

b. Methods of Identifying Students with Individual Needs and Learning Differences

Pre enrolment:

- The SENCO will contact feeder schools to identify possible students with individual needs and learning differences.
- The SENCO and/or the Principal will meet with parents. All relevant documentation in relation to the student with SEN should be passed on to the School, in accordance with the Admissions Policy and in order to ensure that adequate resources can be accessed for that student when they arrive in East Glendalough School.
- Any documentation in relation to a student with SEN will be referred to the North Wicklow Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO), who will decide what resources should be made available e.g. allocation of resource hours, Special Needs Assistant allocation, specialized equipment, etc.
- It is to be understood that the ability of the school to respond to the educational needs of any student applying for admission is dependent on the Department of Education supplying the appropriate facilities and resources to allow the school to answer that need. It may therefore be necessary for the Board of Management to defer a student starting in the School, pending provision of appropriate resources by the DES to meet the needs of that student.

Screening of First Year students

- All first years are screened using standardised screening tests in literacy and numeracy, e.g. the Drumcondra Reasoning Test.
- Students who are achieving below the 10th percentile in literacy and numeracy may be selected for further diagnostic assessments.
- On the other hand, having liaised with the relevant staff, the SENCO may decide that the student's needs do not merit their involvement. In many cases, a student's needs are resolved through the provision of differentiated work suited to their needs.
- If considered appropriate, these students' parents will be offered the opportunity for their child to avail of the appropriate Learning Support or Resource Teaching.
- Further referrals may be made to outside agencies i.e. the NCSE, NEPS, HSE – where it is deemed appropriate by the SENCO or Principal, in consultation with parents and the SENCO.

Students with SEN who transfer from another post-primary school

- Any student with SEN who transfers from another post-primary school will have the appropriate resources made available to them as soon as possible after the NCSE criteria are fulfilled. To effect this as speedily as possible, parents of transferring students are asked to pass on details of previous assessments and SEN supports.

Ongoing assessment of students

- From time to time, it can emerge that a student who was not previously identified as having individual needs and learning differences is experiencing barriers to learning. For students who continue to cause concern referral to the SEN Department may be appropriate.
- Students in 1st Year will undergo a standardized assessment (CAT4). This may indicate that a student would benefit from further assessment.
- If the SEN Department decides that a student would benefit from further intervention, they will assess the student formally using NCSE-recommended testing procedures. Assessment may take place during resource/learning support classes, and may take place with students who have not previously been identified as having needs. The outcome of this assessment will determine what course of action is taken.
- The results of any assessment may indicate that a student has not got a learning difficulty. In this case the student's needs are supported through the structures available to all students, such as mentoring/monitoring by Year Head, support from the Guidance Counsellor, review of entry levels for State Examinations, etc.
- If the results any assessment indicate that a student has a learning difficulty a decision may be made to refer the student for a formal Psychological Assessment e.g. to NEPS, or to allocate that student Learning Support hours.
- In its operations, the School shall be guided by the NEPS-recommended guidelines for establishing a continuum of assessment and support.

6. Allocation of Resources and Teaching of Students with SEN

Resources in school will be directed towards the students in greatest need i.e. those in receipt of resource hours from the NCSE, or who are below the 10th percentile in standardised tests.

The SEN team will interpret the outcome of assessments and consider the most appropriate form of intervention for the pupil, in consultation with parents, subject teachers, SNAs and relevant outside agencies.

In so far as possible students with Special Educational Needs will be educated in an inclusive setting within the class group. This may take the form of team-teaching particular subjects, where the SEN/ Learning Support teacher goes into the classroom with the subject teacher to facilitate the particular needs of the students if considered appropriate. It may also take the form of small classes for students who are struggling with a particular subject.

If withdrawal of SEN pupils from mainstream classes for supplementary or resource teaching is deemed necessary, parents' permission will be sought. Students may be timetabled with a subject teacher for Learning Support, if the SENCO or Principal deems it appropriate. The timetabling of such classes is reviewed on a regular basis by the SENCO. Where possible, withdrawal from mainstream classes will be timetabled to coincide with language exemptions.

Modes of Provision of Learning Support

- Individual classes are used only where a student requires specialised individual support.
- Individual classes are provided for students requiring emotional/behavioural support. Students with ASD may be supported with a mix of individual classes and group sessions to work on social skills.
- Small group classes is the preferred method of provision with most students in resource and learning support getting their allocation in small groups. The organisation of these groupings is the job of the SENCO. Groups are arranged on the basis of similar need profiles and the capacity to withdraw students at the same time. Withdrawal for small groups usually occurs during Irish for those students who are exempt.
- Withdrawal classes: the Post Primary Guidelines on the inclusion of students with SEN defines withdrawal students as those who are 'withdrawn from mainstream classes for individualised or small group teaching, often in the areas of literacy, mathematics or social skills training.'^v
- Small subject classes are used where groups of students are given Maths, Irish and English learning support at the same time as other students are studying these subjects, in order to allow for a foundation class or a supported pass class in these core subjects.
- Reduced Timetable. A small number of students whom it is deemed, after consultation with the NEPS psychologist, parents and teachers, cannot sustain a full curriculum, have their timetable reduced. In as far as possible, extra learning support or more classes in remaining subjects are provided at the time of the dropped subjects (ie Special Class).
- Collaborative teaching: this involves two or more teachers working together to deliver instruction to a group of students.^{vi} Transition from primary to post-primary: the School runs

^v DES 2007, p. 55

^{vi} Conderman, 2011

a comprehensive transition programme, particularly for students with SEN, which follows guidelines on the transition from primary to post primary as outlined by NEPS and SESS.

Approaches to Learning in the Learning Support Department

The SEN Department staff will provide a variety of experiences/activities during a course of study and during a lesson if possible. Teachers will try to identify the learning style of the individual and use suitable methodologies to appeal to the kinesthetic, auditory, sensory, linguistic, visual and interpersonal intelligences. There are opportunities for individual and group activities.

Lessons are conducted in a secure, supportive and disciplined manner. The pupils and the staff interact in a manner that demonstrates mutual respect. East Glendalough School believes that learning takes place most effectively in the context of a caring relationship and that good teacher/pupil relationships foster trust and promote self reliance and initiative in the student.

7. Administrative Issues in the SEN Department

Reasonable Accommodations

The SEN Department will liaise with the State Examinations Commission to secure and facilitate reasonable accommodations for eligible students with individual needs and learning differences during State Examinations. Applications for Junior Certificate students take place in October of the school year when the examination takes place. Applications for Leaving Certificate/Leaving Certificate Applied students take place in May of the previous school year. Parental permission is always sought at this stage.

Students with individual needs and learning differences sit house exams in accordance with East Glendalough School procedures. In as much as can be achieved with limited resources students who have been awarded special arrangements for State Exams will have the benefit of the same in East Glendalough School exams.

Equipment

The SEN Department will liaise with the Department of Education & Skills and the NCSE to secure and facilitate personal equipment (such as laptop computers, voice recognition software) for eligible students with individual needs and learning differences. This equipment remains the property of the school. Parents are also asked to sign a waiver relating to such equipment.

Data Protection

Individual files (including IEPs) will be kept on each student in the care of the SEN Department. Information in the files may include psychological reports, results from entrance assessments, correspondence between the school, parents and other relevant agencies, and applications for support and concessions.

Files are maintained by the SENCO and access is afforded to the Principal, the Deputy Principal, members of the Special Needs Department, Year Heads and the Guidance Counsellor.

Beyond these individuals, information regarding special needs is communicated to teachers on a need to know basis. In accordance with section 14.(1.d) of the EPSEN Act 2004, the School 'shall ensure that all relevant teachers and other relevant employees of the schools are aware of the special educational needs of students'. Information is provided to teachers staff meetings throughout the year.

Minutes of weekly SEN Department meetings, SNA meetings, etc. (which may identify students) shall be kept securely under the responsibility of the SENCO. Each teacher in the SEN Department will keep their own attendance and progress records which shall be filed securely.

For the purposes of organization, all general correspondence relating to the SEN Department shall be directed to the SENCO.

Homework Procedures

Where SEN homework is given, the same procedures apply as per any other homework. Special emphasis is placed on positive feedback. A student's journal may also be used frequently to facilitate communication with parents.

Links with Outside Agencies and Services

East Glendalough School works with a significant number of outside agencies. These include:

- National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- the North Wicklow Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO)
- Special Education Support Service (SESS)
- National Education Psychological Service (NEPS)
- State Examinations Commission (SEC)
- National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)
- HSE Social Work Dept
- *Lucena Clinic* services to include:
 - Clinical psychologists
 - Occupational therapists
 - Speech & language therapists

- HSE services
- Third Level Student Support Services
- Association for Higher Education Access and Disability
- Dyslexia Association of Ireland
- The Dyspraxia Association
- Enable Ireland
- Aspire (Aspergers support)

This list is not exhaustive and the School will develop further links with outside agencies as the needs of the students dictate.

It may be necessary to hold case conferences with relevant professional experts with the permission and knowledge of the student's parents (and often their attendance) in order to determine the best approach and provision for that student.

NEPS Assessments

In the likely event of excess demand for a limited availability of NEPS psychological assessments, a waiting list system shall apply. Places on this list shall be based on priority of need as determined by the Principal and the SENCO.

8. ASD Units

East Glendalough School currently offers the chance to avail of a separate unit for children with high ASD care needs.

These units only cater for students already admitted to East Glendalough School and a separate ASD enrolment policy applies.

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