

SCOIL BHRÉANAINN, PORTMAGEE

Additional Support Policy - Support for All

Introductory Statement

Our SEN policy was coordinated by the staff of Scoil Bhréanainn. This policy was reviewed and amended by a working group in November 2018, in accordance with Circular No 0013/2017. It was again reviewed and amended in November 2024 to encompass the changes that have occurred in our school.

School Information

Scoil Bhréanainn is under the patronage of The Catholic Church. We endeavour to create a positive and inclusive atmosphere that respects all children, regardless of their religious, social, cultural background or special educational needs. Our school is rural DEIS. Since September 2022, we have welcomed many EAL families and their primary aged children are enrolled in our school.

Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide practical guidance to staff, parents and other interested parties about our SEN procedures and practices.
- outline the framework for addressing additional needs in our school.
- comply with legislation (Education Act 1998, Equal Status Act, 2000)
- fulfil DES circular 0013/17 -Circular to the Management Authorities of all Mainstream Primary Schools; Special Education Teaching Allocation, and new 2017 Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools).

Belief Statement

Our school is dedicated to the implementation of an effective system for meeting the needs of all our pupils in accordance with our mission statement, the resources provided by the DES and the Board of Management.

We believe that all our children have a right to an education, which is appropriate to their individual needs. We strive to ensure that all our children feel that they are a valued part of our school community. We are fully committed to the principle of inclusion. This policy aims to enable children with Special Education Needs (SEN) and children whose first language is not English, to become fully integrated members of our school community. This will be achieved by careful consideration of the needs of each child and by either modifying the environment, activities or by providing support that will help the child to participate in them.

Aims of the Policy

This policy aims to outline our procedures and practices of how we:

- identify additional needs that our pupils may have
- allocate resources to effectively meet the needs of children with additional needs
- divide the roles and responsibilities among our school community in relation to pupils with additional needs
- track, monitor, review and report on the progress of children with additional needs
- communicate information between the SET team, principal, staff and parents/guardians

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management:

The BOM oversees the development, implementation and review of school policy on SEN. They also ensure that adequate classroom accommodation, secure storage space and effective teaching resources are provided.

Principal:

The *Learning Support Guidelines (2000, P.39)* outlined the principal has overall responsibility for SEN procedures and practices in the school. The new allocation model states the principal's leadership role is central and includes the following;

The school principal should

- Implement and monitor the school's Additional Needs policy on an on-going basis.
- Co-ordinate teachers' work to ensure continuity of provision for all pupils
- Ensure that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, pupils and external professionals/agencies
- Ensure that effective systems are implemented to identify pupils' needs and that progress is monitored methodically
- Facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to education of pupils with special educational needs, and ensure that all school staff (class teachers, EAL/special education teachers and special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area
- Assign responsibility for coordinating additional support to an identified teacher (i.e. SENCO – new role for recently appointed AP2 post)
- Communicate with the SENO (Special Education Needs Organiser)
- Oversee a whole school assessment and screening programme
- Inform staff about external agencies and provide information on continuing professional development in the area of SET
- Meet with parents regarding any concerns about their child and update them regarding their progress

SEN Co-ordinator (New role since November 2024):

SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) should:

- Communicate with the principal in relation to SEN matters on an on-going basis
- Liaise with external agencies about the provision for pupils with additional needs
- Liaise with the NEPS psychologist, the SET team and class teachers to prioritise children for psychological assessments (NEPS)
- Co-ordinate regular SET team planning meetings to ensure effective communication and support for children with additional needs
- Collaborate with the SET team in creating timetables for additional support
- Meet with parents regarding any concerns about their child, advise parents on procedures for availing of special needs services and update them regarding their progress
- Co-ordinate the whole-school standardised testing at each class level
- Co-ordinate the screening of pupils for additional support, using the results of standardised tests
- Select children for external diagnostic assessment, where parental permission has been sought and granted
- Maintain lists of pupils who are receiving additional support

Class Teacher:

Class teachers have primary responsibility for the teaching and learning of **all** pupils in his/her class, including those selected for additional support. They should

- implement teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all pupils and, to the greatest extent possible, prevent the emergence of learning difficulties
- create a positive learning environment within the classroom
- differentiate teaching strategies, approaches and expectations to the range of experiences, abilities, needs and learning styles in their class
- administer and correct standardised tests of achievement in literacy and numeracy, following the school's guidelines
- discuss outcomes of standardised testing with Autism Class Teachers/SETs/EAL teachers to assist in the selection of children for supplementary teaching
- meet with parents regarding any concerns about their child and update them regarding their progress
- gather information and assess children presenting with needs to inform teaching and learning using the Continuum of Support
- open a Student Support File (SSF) once additional needs have been identified and require **classroom support**
- develop classroom support plans for children in receipt of Classroom Support
- collaborate with SET and relevant staff for each pupil in receipt of School Support/School Support Plus
- meet with Special Education Teachers, parents/guardians and other staff members to identify priority learning goals for each pupil in receipt of School Support Plus
- regularly meet with Special Education Teachers, relevant staff (School Support) and parents (School Support Plus) to review SSF
- where applicable, collaborate with the SET team regarding teaching aims and activities for team teaching
- adjust the class timetable to ensure that children in receipt of supplementary teaching will not be absent for the same subject/activity during each session. For children with an Irish exemption, aim to schedule Irish during withdrawal time.

- co-ordinate the role and responsibilities of the SNA in relation to the needs of pupils with SEN within the class(es) to which they are assigned

Special Education Teacher (SET)/ Autism Class Teacher:

The SET/Autism Class teacher should:

- familiarise themselves with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and to meet a variety of need
- assist in the implementation of a broad range of whole school strategies aimed at prevention and early intervention, for example station teaching, team teaching, reading buddies, etc
- collaboratively develop SMART targets and make a learning plan for each pupil selected for school support teaching with class teachers and other staff
- meet with class Teachers, parents/guardians and other staff members to identify priority learning goals for each pupil in receipt of School Support Plus
- collaborate with class teachers and relevant staff to develop a SSF for each pupil in receipt of School Support Plus
- regularly meet with class teachers, relevant staff to review targets
- update and maintain planning and progress records for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of school support
- provide supplementary teaching for literacy and numeracy on a withdrawal and in-class support basis
- support whole-school procedures for screening
- administer and interpret diagnostic tests and inform class teachers and parents of the outcomes
- meet with parents regarding any concerns about their child and update them regarding their progress
- co-ordinate class groups and offer advice and support to class teachers regarding pupils on their caseload
- discuss the needs and progress of children on their caseload at planning meetings
- provide necessary information to a SEN pupil's receiving school once a transfer letter has been received

Special Needs Assistants:

The duties of the SNA carried out according to the guidelines for Special Needs Assistants from the Department of Education and Skills and under the direction of the principal/class teachers, the SNA will meet the care needs of the SEN pupils to which they have been assigned (Circular 07/02, Circular 0030/2014).

The SNA should

- support the needs of pupils in effectively accessing the curriculum
- contribute to the quality of care and welfare of the pupils
- support learning and teaching in the classroom
- attend, where possible, training courses/workshops provided by the BOM
- attend SSF meetings and/or meetings with relevant professionals, when necessary
- ensure the safety of the SEN pupils in the schoolyard, and be present for the duration of the yard breaks along with the teachers on duty
- maintain a record of support provided to their SEN pupil
- accompany SEN pupil to supplementary lessons when appropriate

Parents/Guardians:

Collaboration and sharing of relevant information between home and school are essential elements of our SEN policy. Parents/Guardians through their unique knowledge of their own children have much to contribute to their child's learning.

Parent/Guardian should:

- share any information, reports or reports pending from health professionals, and/or concerns regarding their child's development. Copies of professional reports should be provided to the school at the enrolment stage
- support the work of the school and keep the class teacher informed of the progress and challenges they observe in their child's learning
- attend meetings arranged by the class teacher or SET team
- support the targets outlined in their child's support plans and engage in all suggested home-based activities
- inform the post-primary school of their child's needs, at the transition stage

Pupils:

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

- be given the opportunity to contribute to the setting of the medium and short-term learning targets
- become familiar with the targets that have been set for them
- develop 'ownership' of the skills and strategies that are taught during supplementary teaching and learn to apply these learning strategies and skills to improve their own learning
- contribute to the evaluation of their progress by participating in appropriate assessment activities, including self-assessment

The Role of External Agencies and Bodies

- Support and guidance is available to teachers from external professionals such as NEPS Psychologists, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), the NCSE Support Service, the Inspectorate, and allied health professionals.
- The school has established procedures for liaising with these services and bodies to optimise the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs at the individual, group or whole-school level.

Identifying Pupils with Additional Needs

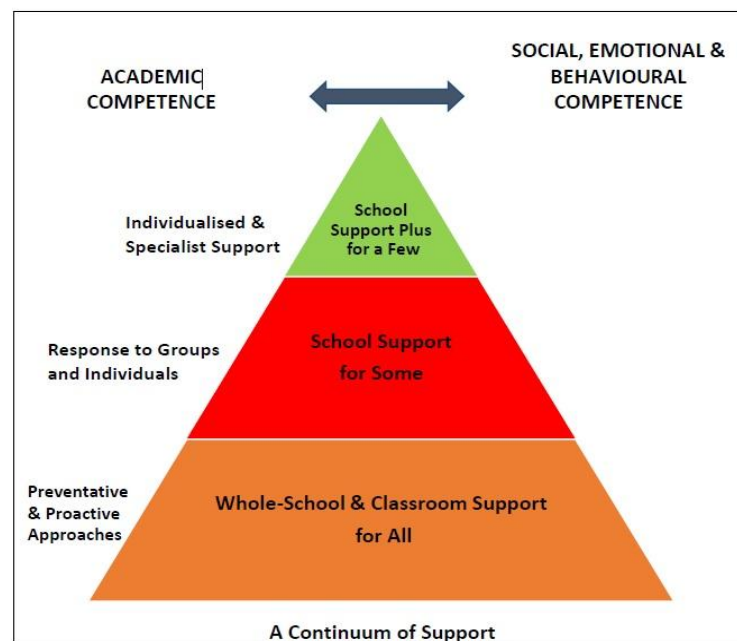
Continuum of Support

We use the Continuum of Support Framework set out by the Department of Education to identify and support children with additional needs. Like this framework, we recognise that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long-term and that pupils require different levels of support depending on their identified additional needs. By using this framework, it helps us implement a staged approach to ensure that our support and interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support, and are informed by careful monitoring of progress.

The Continuum of Support is a problem-solving model of assessment and intervention that enables us to gather and analyse data, as well as to plan and review the progress of individual pupils.

Identification of educational needs is central to our policy and the new allocation model. By using the Continuum of Support framework, we can identify pupils' educational needs, to include academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, - sensory, language and communication difficulties. This, in turn, allows us to identify and respond to needs in a flexible way.

The Continuum of Support suggests the following levels of support:



STAGE 1 CLASSROOM SUPPORT

Classroom Support is the most common, and typically the first response to emerging needs. It is a response for pupils who have distinct or individual educational needs and who require approaches to learning and/or behaviour which are **additional to or different** from those required by other pupils in their class. Problem-solving at this level typically begins when a parent or teacher has concerns about an individual pupil. The teacher, Class Co-ordinator and parents discuss the nature of the problem and consider strategies which may be effective. Classroom Support incorporates the simple, informal problem-solving approaches commonly used by class teachers to support emerging needs.

STAGE 2 SCHOOL SUPPORT

In some cases, interventions at classroom support level are not enough to fully meet the pupil's special educational needs. School Support may, therefore, be required. The class teacher needs to involve the Special Education Teacher Team (SET Team) in the problem-solving process at this point and it involves more systematic gathering of information and the development and monitoring of a School Support Plan.

STAGE 3 SCHOOL SUPPORT PLUS

If a pupil's special educational needs are **severe and/or persistent**, they are likely to need intensive support. School Support Plus will generally involve personnel outside the school team in the problem solving, assessment and intervention process. However, the information from Classroom and School Support work will provide the starting point for problem-solving at this level. Classroom support and school support will continue to be an important element of his/her individual education plan.

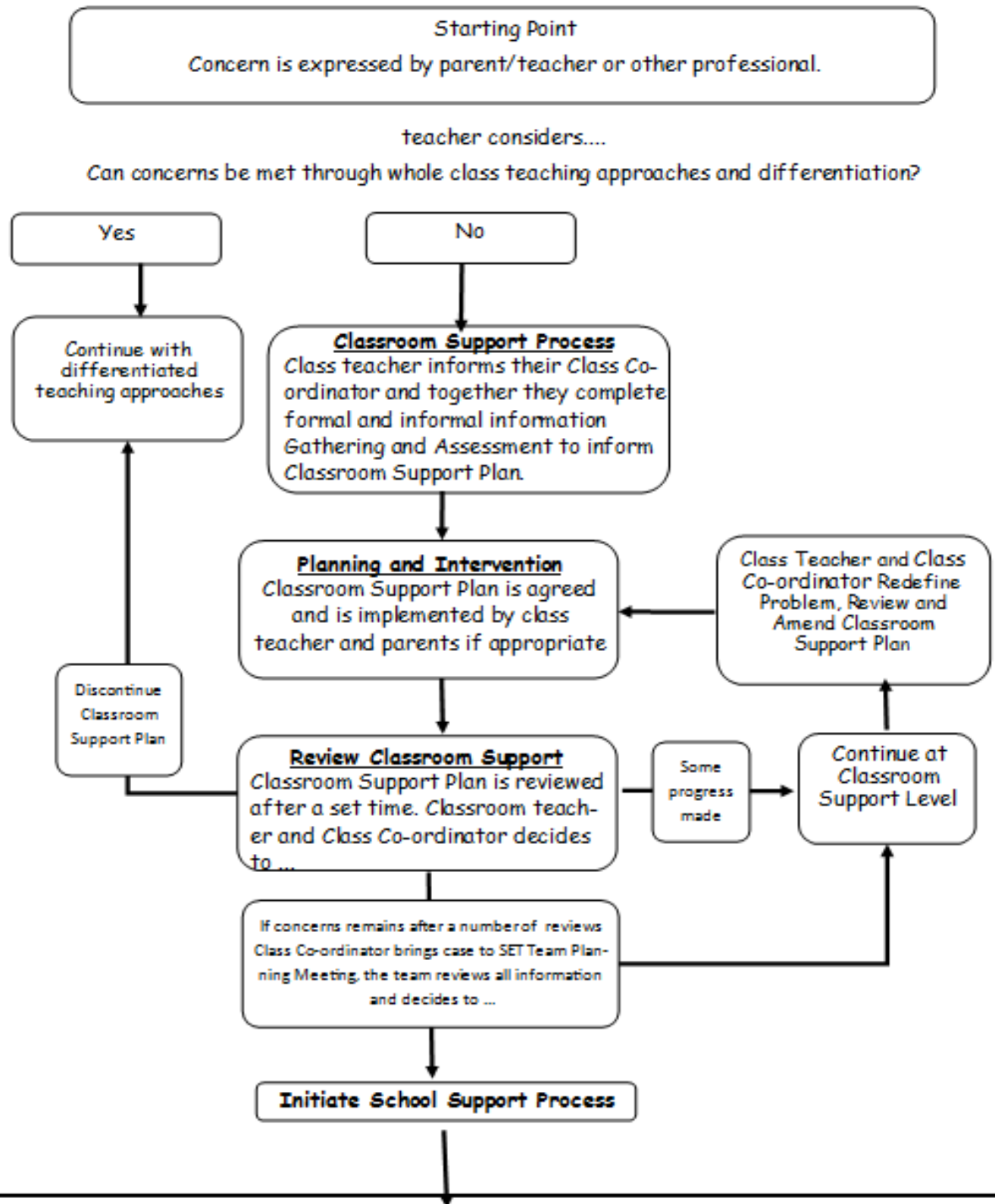
The flow diagrams below outline how we gather information to identify needs and support children with additional needs. A more comprehensive explanation of each stage can be in the Continuum of Support – Guidelines for teachers

https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_special_needs_guidelines.pdf

***While most pupils' initial needs should be met through classroom based interventions, a small number of pupils may arrive at school with difficulties that are more significant or which are immediately recognised. In such cases, it may be more appropriate to begin with a School Support or School Support Plus Plan. Most of the pupils to whom this applies will be new to the school. However it may also apply for some pupils following an event which impacts significantly on them in school. ***

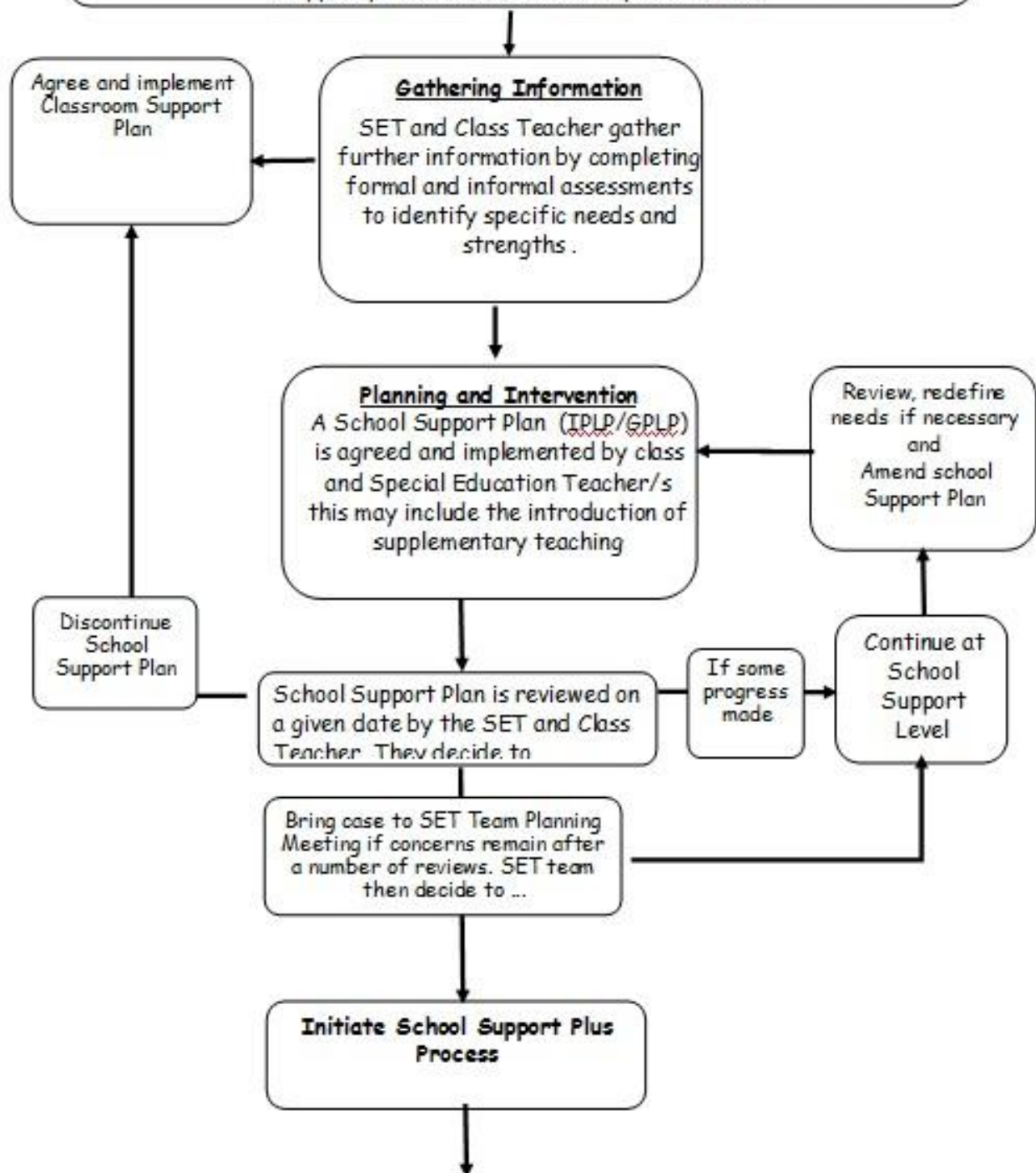
CLASSROOM SUPPORT PROCESS

STAGE 1



* adapted from NEPS Continuum of Support.

Starting Point
 Child has not made progress after interventions at classroom support level or child meets the criteria for a Stage 2 intervention after Standardised testing. SET Teacher and Class teacher reviews the records detailing the Classroom Support process, re-defines the problem and...



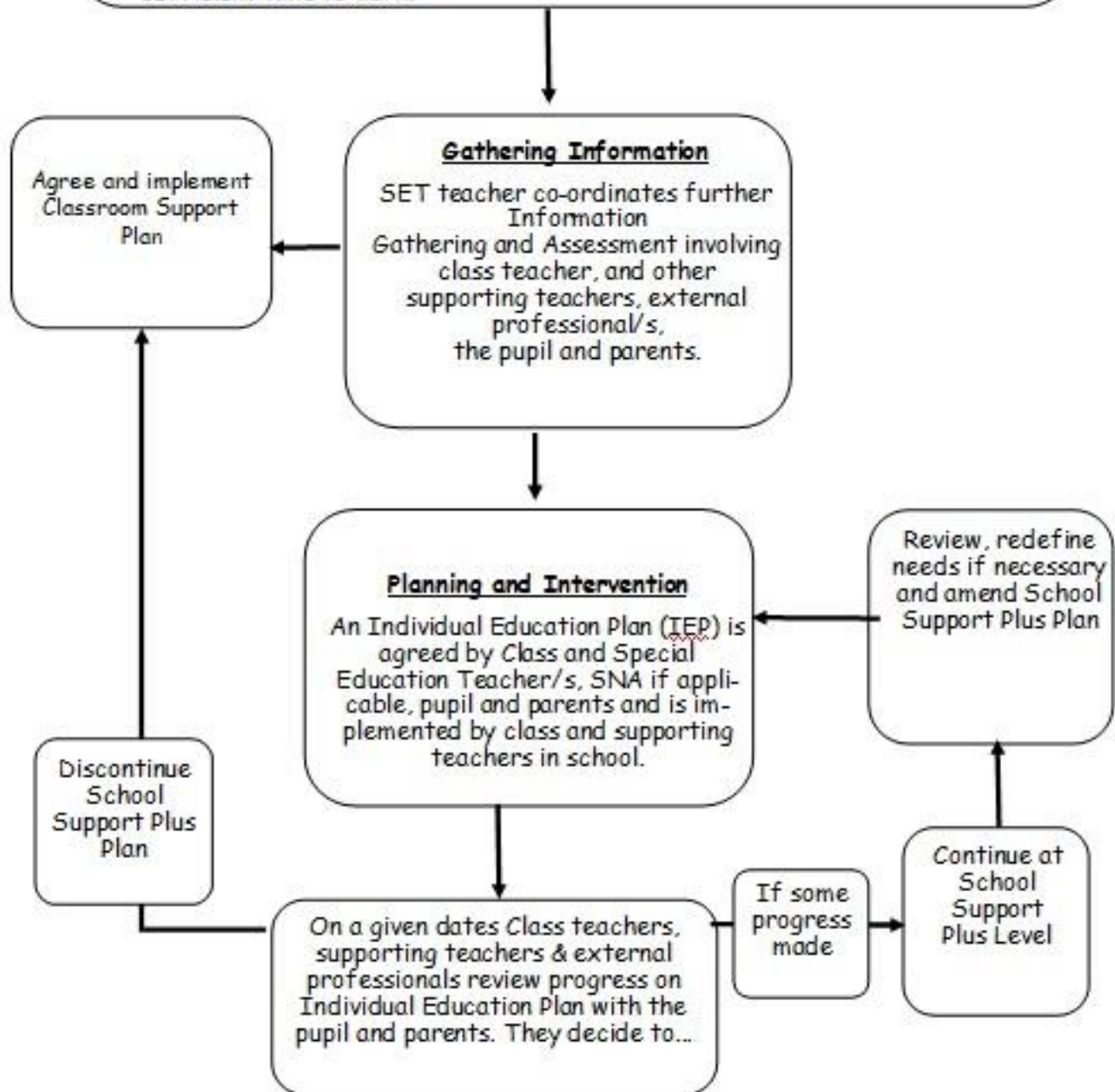
* adapted from NEPS Continuum of Support.

Starting Point

Child has not made progress after interventions at school support level or child meets the criteria for a Stage 3 intervention after a diagnosis from an outside agency.

SET and Classroom teacher considers...

- Are the pupils needs causing significant barriers to learning or impeding development of social relationships?
- Is progress inadequate despite support provided?
- Were interventions; based on evidence from assessment; well planned and given sufficient time to work?



* adapted from NEPS Continuum of Support.

Information Gathering and Assessment

Assessment is part of what a class teacher does on a daily basis for all children. Some methods include self-assessment, questioning, teacher observation, portfolios of work and teacher-designed tasks and tests. The information gathered enables the teacher to plan learning experiences based on the appropriate objectives from the curriculum.

In order to identify pupils who may require supplementary teaching, screening; including standardised testing, is carried out in all classes annually and further diagnostic testing may need to take place. The information gathered from these formal assessments is then used to inform decisions for support and pupil's support plans.

Assessment and Screening Tests:

In our school we carry out the following assessment procedures:

- Junior Infants: Observation, Checklists, BIAP (on selected pupils)
- Senior Infants: Observation, Checklists, Drumcondra Early Reading, Drumcondra Early Numeracy, Test2R completed 1:1 where appropriate
- 1st class: Observation, Checklists, Drumcondra Reading, Drumcondra Numeracy
- 2nd class: Observation, Checklists, Drumcondra Reading, Drumcondra Numeracy
- 3rd class: Observation, Checklists, Drumcondra Reading, Drumcondra Numeracy
- 4th class: Observation, Checklists, Drumcondra Reading, Drumcondra Numeracy, NNRIT
- 5th class: Observation, Checklists, Drumcondra Reading, Drumcondra Numeracy
- 6th class: Observation, Checklists, Drumcondra Reading, Drumcondra Numeracy

As a school, we also carry out the YARC with children scoring on or below the 12th percentile in the Drumcondra Reading in classes Senior Infants- 5th and DRA for 6th class. We use the MALT as a numeracy Diagnostic tool.

We continually review the assessment and screening tests that we use in order to balance the needs of our pupils and the need to provide information for appropriate support. Therefore we may deviate from the above list prior to the review date.

Inventory of Test Materials

Screening Tests

- Belfield Infant Assessment Profile (BIAP)
- Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST)
- Drumcondra Early Reading
- Drumcondra Reading
- Drumcondra Early Numeracy
- Drumcondra Maths
- Drumcondra Spelling Test
- New Non- Reading Intelligence Test (NNRIT)

Diagnostic Tests

In our school the following tests are available for administration:

- Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA)
- Test2R
- PAT programme
- MALT
- York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC)
- Two Peas Phonological Awareness Assessment

Prevention and Intervention Strategies

Our strategies for preventing learning difficulties include:

- The development of agreed approaches to the teaching of Literacy and Numeracy in order to ensure progression and continuity from class to class.
- Provision of additional support in language development and any relevant early literacy and mathematical skills to pupils who need it.
- Ongoing structured observation and assessment of the language, literacy and numeracy skills of pupils in the infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties.
- Close collaboration and consultation between the Infant Teacher and the SET team.
- Promotion of literacy e.g. Print-rich environment, DEAR (Drop Everything and Read),
- Promotion of Numeracy e.g. Hands-on approach, Station teaching, CCTs
- Parental involvement in promoting literacy and numeracy e.g. Levelled readers for homework
- Homework Policy Guidelines for Parents
- Neurodiversity week
- Inclusive practices
- Differentiation - adapting the learning environment.
- In-class support from the SET team.
- Station Teaching/Team Teaching/Aistear.
- Withdrawing individuals/groups.
- Reading buddies/Friends for Life/Emotional ABCs
- Discrete spelling interventions in the classrooms from 1st – 6th including SET support
- Creating a strong link with Post Primary school for transition

Meeting the Needs and Allocating Resources

Once pupils needs have been identified, Special Education Teachers (SETs) are deployed to address these needs as required. We deploy SETs in a variety of ways in order to effectively meet pupils' needs. We aim to strike a balance between in-class support and group support while ensuring that the needs of children with additional needs are met inclusively.

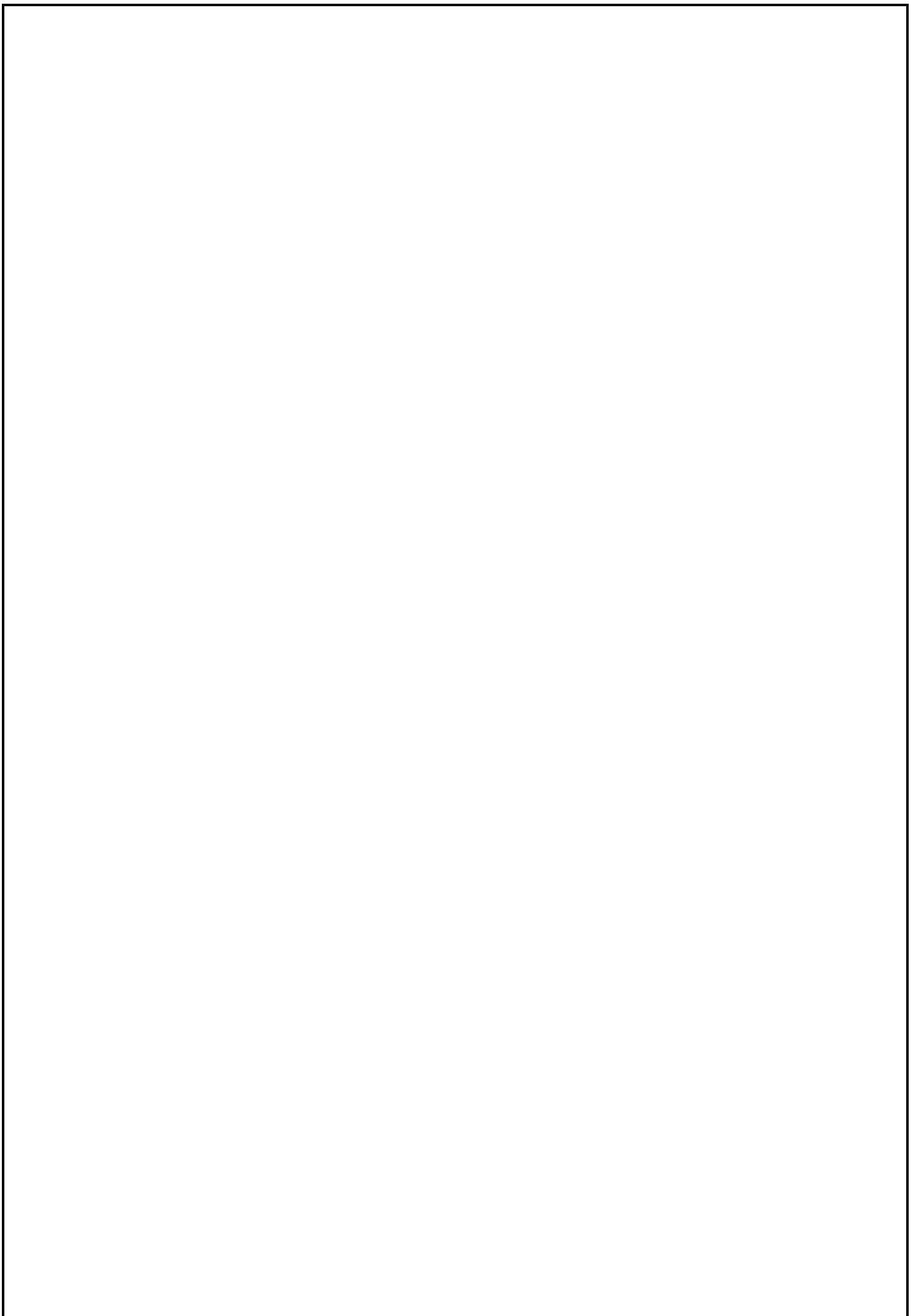
In addition to mainstream classes and SET support, we also have two Autism Classes. The staff i.e. Autism Class Teachers and SNAs provide support in their classrooms for children who meet the criteria to be enrolled in these classes. The teaching and learning can occur solely in this classroom, alongside integration into mainstream classes or also in the form of reverse integration. Each child is an individual and the support they require is provided on an individual basis.

Class Teachers and SNAs work closely with both SETs and Autism Class Teachers to ensure each child has access to the supports needed. Some of the strategies and resources that are now in place include the sensory room, use of visual timetables in each classroom, provision of wobble cushions, fidget toys and theraputty are evident in all classrooms. This eases the transition for pupils between classrooms.

Importantly, the level and type of support reflect the specific targets of individual pupils as set out in their support plans and are informed by careful monitoring and review of progress. In this way, following a period of intervention, some pupils may no longer require additional teaching supports; some may require the same level, while others may require more intensive supports.

In planning the allocation of additional teaching supports, the over-riding principle is that resources are deployed to address the identified needs of pupils. Importantly, those with **the highest level of need should have access to the greatest level of support**. We consider methodologies best suited to promoting meaningful inclusion such as differentiation, heterogeneous grouping, team-teaching and small group teaching.

In addition to literacy and numeracy difficulties, many pupils will have specific needs in such areas as oral language, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development, motor skills and application to learning. In order to be enrolled in the Autism class, a pupil must have a diagnosis of Autism and a recommendation from the assessing professional that the child attends an Autism class.



Timetabling

When drawing up timetables it is important to remember that:

- timetables should be continually reviewed
- children should not miss the same subject each time they are withdrawn
- if a pupil is unavailable for their supplementary session due to special circumstances, the Special Education Teacher will attempt to reschedule the session with the co-operation of another teacher.
- interruptions to classes/classrooms should be kept to a minimum.

Tracking, recording and reviewing progress

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is enhanced through clear identification processes and careful planning of interventions to address academic and/or personal and social development needs. Identification of needs, planning, target-setting and monitoring of outcomes are essential elements of an integrated and collaborative problem-solving process.

Student Support File

We use a Student Support File to plan interventions and to track a pupil's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates us in documenting progress and needs over time and assists us in providing an appropriate level of support to pupils, in line with their level of need.

Many different types of support plans can be included in the Support File. A support plan can take the form of a general plan for support, a behavioural plan, an individual profile and learning programme, an individual educational plan or a personalised pupil plan.

Our Student Support File is based on the NEPS template and is stored on the school server. All support files should include:

- Cover sheet with pupil's details
- A timeline of actions
- Record of support received
- Standardised/ Diagnostic test scores
- Support plans (See below)
- Checklists

A class teacher or class coordinator should open a Student Support File once a child is placed on Stage 1 –Classroom Support on the continuum. This is stored digitally on the server (Databiz) in Pupil Records and a paper copy is stored in the pupil filing cabinet stored in the office.

Support Plans

We use three different support plans for the three stages of support on the Continuum of Support.

Stage 1 – Classroom Support

A Support Plan at stage 1 is a **Classroom Support Plan**. (CSP) This is a simple plan which is drawn up by the Class Teacher in collaboration with the SEN Class Coordinator which outlines the pupil's additional educational needs and the actions, including individualised teaching and management approaches, which will be taken to meet the pupil's needs. The plan may also include home-based actions to be taken by the pupil's parents to support their child's development. The Classroom Support Plan should include a review date. This could be at the end of a school term.

Stage 2 – School Support

A Support Plan at stage 2 is a plan is drawn up by the class teacher and appointed SET teacher. It will set out the nature of the pupil's learning difficulties, define specific teaching, learning and behavioural targets and set a timescale for review. The plan should, for the most part, be implemented within the normal classroom setting and complimented by focused school based intervention programmes. Depending on the nature of the needs and on the school context, additional teaching might be within a small group or individual or a combination of both either in class or on a withdrawal basis. Home-based actions may also be included. After the plan has been drawn up, it should become a working document through the careful monitoring of the pupil's response to the actions taken.

Stage 3 – School Support Plus

A Support Plan at stage 3 is a plan is drawn up by the class teacher and appointed Special Education Teachers, in consultation with the child's parents/guardians, professionals external to the school and (if appropriate) the child based on the information gathered. It will set out;

- The nature and degree of the pupil's abilities, skills and talents
- The nature and degree of the pupil's special educational needs and how those needs affect his/her educational development
- The present level of educational performance of the pupil
- The special educational needs of the pupil
- The special education and related support services to be provided to the pupil to enable the pupil to benefit from including:
 - Strategies for supporting the pupil's progress and inclusion in the classroom setting
 - Individual and/or small group/special class interventions/programmes
 - Specific methodologies/programmes to be implemented
 - Specific equipment/materials and/or IT supports, if required to support learning and access to the curriculum
 - Support required from a Special Needs Assistant (SNA), if appropriate
 - The goals which the pupil is to achieve over a period not exceeding 12 months
 - The pupil's priority learning needs, long and short term targets to be achieved, the monitoring and review arrangements to be put in place

Meetings are coordinated by the SET/Autism Class Teacher. Parents will be invited to the school in the first half of term one for a meeting with SET/Autism Class Teacher and Class Teacher.

Communication between SET Team/Principal/Class Teachers

SET timetables have time each Friday for co-ordination. This allows all staff the opportunity to attend pupils support planning meetings, care team meetings, Team Teaching Planning Meetings and SEN consultation/planning/review meetings, when necessary. This flexibility facilitates regular SET team planning meetings with the principal.

Health and Safety Issues

Every staff member and pupil is entitled to a safe, secure environment and to be treated with due respect. All appropriate measures are taken to ensure the safety of each pupil with SEN. When a place is offered to a child with SEN, every effort will be made to ensure that the supports to which the child is entitled are in place as soon as possible. Staff members will be informed of any potential risks and, where necessary, individual plans will be drawn up and implemented.

Supervision/Child Protection

- Where pupils receive support on a one-to-one basis, the SET teacher is responsible for ensuring that both themselves and the pupil are visible through the glass panel in the door.
- Where there is no glass panel, the door of the room should remain open.
- Where pupils are withdrawn for support, the SET teacher should collect and return children to their classrooms.
- Where a child has access to an SNA, they may withdraw the child from the class if a plan is in place with the class teacher.

Inclusive Practice

All children get the chance to participate in all curricular areas, differentiating by task, questioning and outcome. Inclusion of children from our classes for children with Autism, into age – appropriate mainstream is part of daily school life. We value meaningful inclusion. We endeavour to include all pupils where possible and where mutually beneficial. Such inclusion is a graduated process beginning with inclusion for lunch breaks and then arts subjects and academic subjects, or in a subject area a child has a particular strength in. Time spent included in the mainstream class increases as appropriate. This process requires regular consultation between the Autism class teacher, class teacher and parents/guardians.

All children take part in whole school activities as suits their needs. Where the curriculum is adapted to suit individual needs, this is not highlighted, and all children are still challenged and given the opportunity to experience perseverance, progression and success. Children sit in mixed ability groups.

We encourage a welcoming and tolerant attitude towards difference within the school community. This is evident in our Neurodiversity week. It is evident in the understanding other children show their peers, or children in the younger classes.

Yard Breaks. All Pupils are entitled to their breaks and playtimes. Pupils with additional needs are supported in the following ways: SNA's and Teachers on yard duty supervise diligently, dealing with, recording and reporting any incidents that occur.

PECs picture cards and other visual prompts are used by SNA's to manage particular behaviours. Staff will be aware of different behaviour plans and targets that are relevant to a child's yard time if necessary.

Ratification and Communication

This revised policy was ratified by the Board of Management in December 2024

Implementation and Review

This policy will be implemented from December 2024.

Signed: *Myra Hulme*
(Chairperson)

Date: 10 December 2024

Signed: *Karen Stenson*
(Principal)

Date: 10 December 2024