

Loreto Secondary School



**Special Education Teaching (SET) and
Special/Additional Educational Needs Policy**

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Explanation of abbreviations used in policy:

SEN: Special Educational Needs

AEN: Additional Educational Needs

SSP: Student Support Plan

PPP: Personal Pupil Plan

SET: Special Education Teaching/Teacher

CAT: Cognitive Abilities Test

RACE: Reasonable Accommodations at Certificate Examinations

NEPS: National Educational Psychological Service

1. Introduction

Loreto, Wexford commits itself to the inclusion of all students, particularly those who require Special Education Teaching. Such inclusion in mainstream education is supported by both national and international reports e.g. the Special Education Review Committee 1993, the UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education 1994 and the Council of Europe Political Declaration 2003 and Action Plan 2006. The school also operates within the legislative framework set out by the following:

The Education Act, 1998

The Equal Status Act, 2000 and Equality Act, 2004

The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

The Data Protection Acts, 1988-2003/2018

The Freedom of Information Acts, 1997-2003

The Education for Persons with Special Education Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004

This policy is drafted in close consultation with:

1. Guidelines for Post Primary Schools Supporting Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classes (DES 2024)
2. Circular 14/2017: Special Education Teaching Allocation
3. National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Toolkit: New SET Allocation Model 2017
4. Circular 0064/2024 The Operation/application and deployment of Special Education Teacher resources
5. Indicators of Effective Practice for Post-Primary Schools: Supporting Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classes (DES 2024)
6. Our SNA Deployment Policy and associated documents

This principle of inclusion is embedded in the School Plan and is particularly relevant in policies relating to admission, the health promoting school, behaviour, anti-bullying and attendance. The values in the school's mission statement – truth, freedom, justice, sincerity and joy – relate in equal measure to all members of the student body. Loreto, Wexford sees itself as a community in which a framework exists to accommodate and celebrate the differences between individuals.

Definition

For the purpose of this policy, a special/additional educational need (SEN/AEN) is defined as “a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition”. (EPSEN Act, 2004)

2. Aims

The broad aims and principles of education for students who require SET reflect those that are relevant to all students and include:

- Assisting the student in accessing an appropriate, broad and balanced curriculum.
- Equipping the student with skills to function as independently as possible in society through the provision of such educational supports as are necessary to realise that potential.
- Enabling the student to continue learning in adult life.

The SET makes use of additional supports, such as outside agencies, and information from home and primary schools to assist in achieving these aims.

Services and additional supports

Specific services, additional supports and accommodations are presently in place in the school for students with SEN/AEN, as follows:

- The Visiting Teacher Service for students with visual impairment or who are deaf/hard of hearing, coordinated by the SET Department
- Grants for Assistive Technology, co-ordinated by the SET Department
- Exemption from the study of Irish with reference to Circular 0054/2024 co-ordinated by the SET Core Team
- Scheme of Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations, organised by the SET Core Team and Deputy Principals
- Special Transport, organised by the Principal
- Ongoing referral to the school counsellors, where necessary, to meet need

Transfer from primary to secondary

Prior to the enrolment of a student in the school, all parents are asked to complete a Health Declaration Form in respect of their daughters. Parents are invited to inform the school of any special or additional educational needs through the enrolment form. Permission is requested from parents for members of Student Care Co-ordination Team (SCCT) to visit primary schools and obtain information on incoming First Year students. Any such information provided is viewed by the SET Core Team and/or the SCCT, to establish what, if any, support needs to be applied for or provided as the student moves into secondary education.

In January of the year prior to beginning 1st year, an Information Meeting is held and parents/guardians are given the opportunity to speak to a member of the SET Core Team.

In addition, a member of the (SCCT) liaises with teachers in feeder national schools each April/May to supplement this information.

<h3>3. Access to SET</h3>

Students accessing SET will be identified in the following ways:

- A student who has had a psychological assessment or any other professional report which recommends SET
- A student who has a Specific Learning Difficulty or a General Learning Difficulty
- A student identified during the CAT assessments in 1st and 4th year with a mean score below the 10th percentile
- Consideration of data available on the academic tracking system, Athena Tracker
- A student identified by their mainstream teachers as having difficulty with multiple subjects and this difficulty is reflected in exam results
- Consideration is given to students with diagnosed emotional or behavioural difficulties

4. Identifying Need

In Loreto, Wexford, screening tests are used for the following purposes:

- To inform planning for appropriate teaching and learning
- To evaluate student progress
- To establish a baseline in relation to a student's attainments in literacy and numeracy
- To identify students for SET
- To inform consultations with outside agencies, e.g. National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- To inform applications under the Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations (RACE) system for 3rd and 6th year students

Methods of Assessment/ Profiling Tools

- All 1st year students sit the Cognitive Ability Tests (CAT4) in the first term
- English teachers administer the New Group Reading Test (NGRT) to all 1st year students which is graded by the SET Core Team to acquire a reading age
- All Transition Year students sit the CAT4 and are given their results by the guidance counsellors
- House / end of term exams are carefully monitored by the SET Core Team and the Academic Council, using the Athena Tracker software. House exams are particularly important in 2nd year and 5th year as these exams are used in RACE applications for state exams.

Individual Tests

- WRAT- V is used to obtain standard scores in word reading, spelling, sentence comprehension and maths computation. The SET Core Team administers this test for RACE or if teachers and/or parents raise concerns about a student's progress in these areas.
- The DASH test is used to assess a student's speed of handwriting

Informal Assessment:

- Classroom tests
- Informal observations by parents/guardians, teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)
- Feedback from parents/guardians
- Evaluation of written work
- Information gained from using the NEPS Document – My thoughts about school

5. Range of Special Educational Needs

The categories of special/additional needs outlined in the Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs - Post-Primary Guidelines are outline below. This list is not exhaustive.

- Physical disability

- Hearing impairment
- Visual impairment
- Severe emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems
- Mild general learning disability
- Borderline general learning disability
- Specific learning disability
- Moderate general learning disability
- Severe or profound general learning disability
- Autism/autistic spectrum disorder
- Pupils with special/additional educational needs arising from an assessed syndrome
- Specific speech and language disorder
- Multiple disabilities

6. The Exceptionally Able Student

The students with a mean result of 130 or more are classified as gifted. Students who require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for the general cohort of students are deemed to be exceptionally able. These students may be referred to the DCU Programme for Gifted Students. Information in relation to students classified as gifted will be gathered from primary schools and shared with mainstream teachers in the school.

It is estimated that 5-10% of the school population will demonstrate very high levels of attainment in one or more of the following areas:

- general intellectual ability or talent
- specific academic aptitude or talent
- visual and performing arts / sport.
- leadership ability
- Creative and productive thinking
- Mechanical ingenuity
- Special abilities in empathy, understanding and negotiation

According to Centre for Talented Youth, the range of characteristics identified for the gifted and talented child includes:

- Keen powers of observation
- Learnt to read very early, often before school age
- Reads widely and rapidly
- Well-developed vocabulary - takes delight in using unusual and new words
- Has great intellectual curiosity
- Absorbs information rapidly - often called sponges
- Very good memory - can recall information in different circumstances
- Has the ability to concentrate deeply for prolonged periods
- Very good powers of reasoning and problem solving
- Has intense interests

- Possesses unusual imagination
- Has a great interest in "big" questions, e.g. the nature of the universe, the problem of suffering in the world, environmental issues
- Very sensitive - perhaps gets upset easily
- Very concerned about rights and wrongs, and injustices

In relation to exceptionally able students, appropriate interventions will be identified and discussed with parents/guardians and members of staff.

7. Roles and Responsibilities within SET

Board of Management

- Oversees the development, implementation and review of a SET policy
- Arranges for a periodic review of the range of curriculum provision within the school to ensure that suitable programmes are on offer to all students
- Provides resources for the professional development of staff in supporting students with special educational needs
- Ensures adequate accommodation and resources
- Provides a secure facility for the storage of records
- Ensures that the rights of parents as prescribed in legislation are upheld in the school
- Oversee the correct deployment of SET hours

The Principal

The role of the Principal includes the following:

- Assumes overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school's policies and procedures relating to the inclusion of students with special/additional educational needs
- Oversees a whole-school approach to assessment and screening to identify needs and to guide the allocation of appropriate supports
- Ensures effective engagement with feeder primary schools to support the transition of students with special educational needs
- In collaboration with the in-school management team, discharges a key function in the deployment of staff, allocation of resources, organisation of students and timetabling
- Ensures that systems are in place for sharing of relevant information on students' needs with all subject teachers
- Facilitates the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to the education of students with special/additional educational needs, and ensure that all school staff (subject teachers and special education teachers, guidance counsellors,

special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area

- Ensures that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the involvement of parents, students and external professionals/agencies (Guidelines for post primary school DES)

Mainstream teachers

- Mainstream teachers have the primary responsibility for progress of all students in his/her class.
- Mainstream teachers are obliged to make themselves aware of the special/additional educational needs of students in their classes. They have full access to all information that is relevant to the teaching or supervising of such students via the individual files on students that are kept on the Vs Ware system and the SET files, e.g. Student Support Plans are available on SharePoint.
- Mainstream teachers should consult with the SET Core Team to plan for how best to meet the needs of each student
- Use the available data (e.g. assessment tools, Athena Tracker data) to support their understanding of each student
- In so far as possible, classroom teaching should be differentiated to meet the individual needs of students in classes.

The SET Core Team:

The SET Core Team are responsible for:

- Co-ordinating data gathering, timetabling, screening and testing
- Transition planning for students with special/additional educational needs
- Taking a lead role in planning, implementation and review of Student Support Plans. Developing a student support plan is the outcome of a problem-solving process, involving school staff, parent(s)/ guardian(s) and the student. The Student Support Plan starts by identifying concerns, gathering information, putting together a plan to meet student needs and then reviewing the plan during the year.
- Supporting the communication of information regarding students' needs to subject teachers, class teachers and year-heads.
- Liaising with outside agencies, e.g. NEPS and allied health professionals
- Liaising with parents and students
- A member of the team, as an Assistant Principal 1, is also responsible for whole school inclusion
- Representing SET on the SCCT Team and Academic Councils or any other ad hoc sub-committees relevant to SET
- Liaising with the primary schools and gathering information about the learning needs of students on behalf of the SCCT

Deputy Principals:

- Co-ordinating SNA care in the school
- Working with the SET Core Team to create the SET timetable at the start of the year and organise changes throughout the school year
- Meeting with the SET Core Team each week to support their work and assist where needed
- RACE

The Special Education Teacher (SET)

- The SETs are responsible for working towards the learning targets for students in their care as outlined in the Student Support Plan. The SET has a very good insight into students' needs and when appropriate can provide advice to subject teachers as to the teaching methodologies best suited to students.
- The SET provides direct teaching to a student with special educational needs either to reinforce the teaching that takes place in the classroom or to improve upon the core skills that may be necessary to successfully access the second level curriculum.
- At times withdrawal from the classroom may be the most appropriate means of supporting the student. In other instances, the SET and the subject teacher may decide that team-teaching, co-teaching and/or short-term interventions would have a greater educational benefit.
- When appropriate, the SET is invited to contribute at meetings involving parents and/or outside agencies.

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

- Special Needs Assistants make a valuable contribution to the capacity of the school to provide inclusive education for students with special educational needs. The duties of the SNA are assigned by the Principal acting on behalf of the Board of Management and are outlined in Circular SNA 0030/2014. Their work is supervised by a Deputy Principal and the SET Core Team. The Deputy Principal will meet with the SNAs each week.
- When the SNA is engaged in assisting a student or a group of students in relation to a particular learning task, this should always take place in accordance with the directions of the teacher who has assigned the task.
- An SNA is expected to treat all matters relating to school business and their work in school as strictly confidential.
- SNAs may not act as a teacher. SNAs may not be left in sole charge of a class or group of children unless in exceptional circumstances.
- SNAs are expected to contribute significantly in the drawing up of the Personal Pupil Plan (PPP) required for all students with SNA access. SNAs also supervise lunch-time activities for SEN students and contribute to the Student Support Plans for additional students on an informal basis, i.e. and when students with SNA access are not in school. SNAs contribute to the Student Plans by completing observations on

students in mainstream class. A PPP involves individual planning for students with special educational needs and a care needs dimension should be included. A stand-alone document is not necessarily required. The PPP requirement may be incorporated into the Student Support Plan.

The Guidance Counsellors

- Liaising with the Primary schools and gathering information about the learning needs of students on behalf of the SCCT
- Administering diagnostic assessment tests in Transition Year
- Overseeing DARE applications for third level entry
- Counselling in personal, educational and career development
- Career information management
- Consultations with SET Department, staff and parents
- Referrals to other professionals and agencies

Parents/Guardians

The school encourages open communication between parents and staff.

Parents can make a huge contribution to their child's learning programme. They can prepare for and support the work of the school by:

☐ 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 in collaborative planning for their child. In the case of incoming 1st year students, this information should be provided, where possible, prior to the Information Meeting held each January before starting in the school. In the case of student transfers to other year groups, or students with new assessments, information should be given to the school at the earliest opportunity.

☐ Parents play a critical role in the successful implementation of each child's Student Support Plan

☐ Parents are encouraged to communicate freely with the class teacher/SET teacher at any time, especially if they are concerned about their child's education.

☐ Supporting the work of the school by participating with their child in the following activities:

- Paired reading
- Helping them with their homework
- Using IT where available to support learning

☐ Parents should keep the class teacher informed of the progress that they observe in their child's learning. They should also let the school know of any learning difficulties that they observe in their child at home. If, following diagnostic assessment, the child needs learning support, the parent should attend a meeting with the SET to discuss:

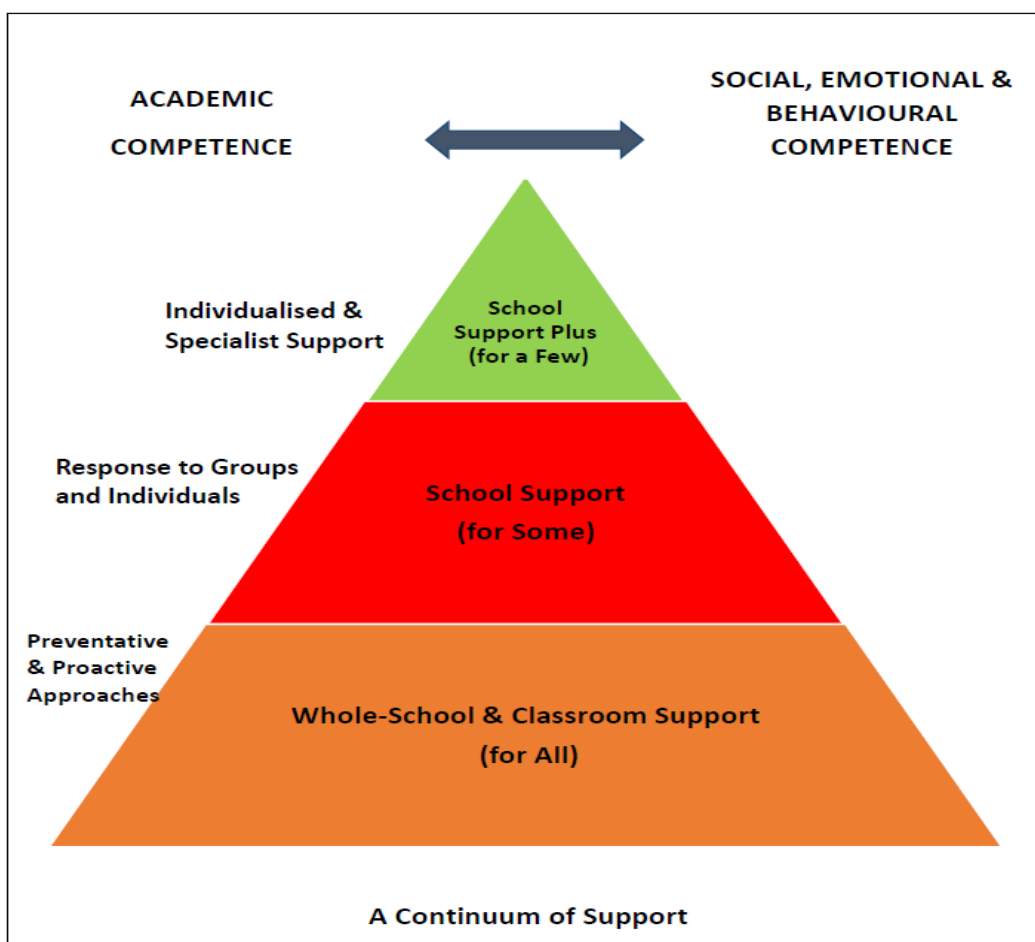
1. The results of the assessment
2. Learning targets set for the student
3. The way that these targets can be supported at home.

Students

Students receiving support should:

- ☐ Have a positive attitude towards supplementary teaching
- ☐ Become familiar with their learning targets, short-term and long-term and they should also be involved in the setting of these 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 during learning support classes and learn to apply these to improve their own learning across the curriculum

8. Model of SEN provision – continuum of support



The SEN Core Team is responsible for co-ordinating the needs of students who require additional support.

Planning is determined by the Continuum of Support Guidelines (NEPS) and is organised in accordance with the six actions as recommended in the NCSE SET Toolkit.

Action 1:

Identification of students with special educational needs

Action 2:

Setting targets

Action 3:

Planning teaching methods and approaches

Action 4:

Organising early intervention and prevention programmes

Action 5:

Organising and deploying special education teaching resources

Action 6:

Tracking, recording and reviewing progress

9. Other Issues

(a) Withdrawals from class

The SET Department may withdraw students from subjects in consultation with the respective teachers and with parents. In some cases, students with special/additional needs may be on a modified timetable to facilitate their needs. Such a decision will ultimately be made by parents/guardians following SCCT consultation and consultation with SET Core Team and Deputy Principals.

(b) Irish Exemptions

Irish exemptions will only be granted when the criteria outlined in Circular 0054/2022 are met. All students who have an Irish exemption based on an identified learning need are currently offered as much support teaching at this time as resources allow. Under the current SET model, an Irish exemption may not automatically result in SET hours, as teaching time is allocated on a needs basis

(c) Parental permission is sought in advance for the transfer of information.

If a psychological assessment is available, a summary of the needs and recommendations is forwarded to all relevant staff. This information is only given with the permission of the parents.

(d) House and Mock Examinations

Every effort is made to offer Reasonable Accommodations to students for school examinations. However, it is not always possible to offer separate centres due to supervision and space constraints.

(e) Feedback:

The school will liaise with parents as necessary throughout the year. Parents will receive written feedback on their child's targets at least once per school year.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of our SET provision will be conducted on an ongoing basis throughout the year by the Principal and Deputy Principals and the SET Core Team. This is done through weekly meetings between the SET Core Team and the Senior Leadership Team.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management in May 2025 and will be subject to periodic review.