**Special Educational Needs Policy**

**Our Lady’s Secondary School Templermore**

**Rationale**

The purpose of this policy document which is regarded as a reflection of current practice 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). The effective provision for SEN students in Our Lady’s is part of an inclusive whole school framework which emphasises effective teaching and learning for all students and good collaboration between the school, parents/guardians and students. This policy is cognisant of developments and new practices in this area.

**School Ethos**

In its Mission Statement, Our Lady’s commits itself to nuturing “the moral, spiritual, social and academic development of each student. We are dedicated to the pursuit of academic excellence and to quality in teaching and learning.” The school believes that all children and young adults should be valued equally irrespective of any individual needs or differences and is committed to making effective provision in its educational programme for those students in the school who have special educational needs. The school is committed to raising standards and helping all students derive the maximum benefit from their education at Our Lady’s. The CEIST charter describes the Catholic School as “an inclusive community ideally built on love and formed by the interaction and collaboration of its various components: students, teachers, parents/guardians, non – teaching staff and members of the Board.” Accordingly the school operates an open admissions’ policy and all staff are fully committed to supporting and nurturing students and co-operating with their families and other agencies involved in their education and welfare.

The following policy should be read in conjunction with other related school policies including the school’s Admissions Policy, ASD Enrolment Policy, Guidance Policy, Child Protection Policy, Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policies.

# The Legislative Context

The Epsen Act (2004) defines Special Educational Needs as follows:

“ ‘Special Educational Needs’ means, in relation to a person, a restriction in the capacity of that 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”.

Earlier the Education Act (1998) defined Special Educational Needs as “the educational needs of students who have a disability and the educational needs of exceptionally able students”.

At Our Lady’s, we are committed, in so far as is practicable, to catering for the educational needs of the range of students included in both the above definitions as well as the needs of students for whom English is not a first language, and students whose special needs arise from from economic, social or emotional disadvantage.

This Special Educational Needs Policy is drafted in the context of the specific provisions and definitions with regard to students with disabilities and special educational needs, and the statutory requirements placed on schools, Boards of Management and the Department of Education and Skills by the following:

Article 42, Bunreacht Na hEireann

The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998, 2003, 2018)

The Education Act 1998

The Education Welfare Act (2000)

The Equal Status Act (2000) and the Equality Act (2004)

The Education for Persons With Disabilities Bill (2003)

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)

Other relevant Oireachtas Legislation and International Agreements.

DES Circular 0014/2017 – Special Education Teaching Allocation

# Aims and Principles

The following aims and principles provide the rationale for Our Lady’s Special Educational Needs Policy:

* To foster a whole-shool, inclusive and integrated approach to provision for Special Educational Needs students that ensures that these students have access to, participate in and benefit from an education suitable to their needs at Our Lady’s.
* To 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 are developed and respected.
* To ensure that all members of staff are aware of the special educational needs of students and of their own role in meeting the educational needs of these students.
* To ensure that students with special educational needs are offered a broad, balanced, relevant, progressive, continuous and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.
* To develop students’ self esteem, confidence and feelings of achievement and fulfilment in accordance with the school’s Mission Statement and related policies.
* To assist staff with the educational management of students with special educational needs where appropriate.
* To encourage and foster positive partnership with parents/guardians in order to achieve appropriate support and co-operation in meeting the educational needs of students with Special Educational Needs.
* To provide regular reports to parents/guardians on the progress of students with Special Educational Needs.
* To liaise with all appropriate agencies for the provision of required resources (including staff, funding and materials) to meet the educational needs of all students with special educational needs.
* To co-operate with relevant agencies in the preparation of programmes of education for students with special educational needs.
* To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources.
* To promote ongoing professional development among staff in the area of Special Educational Needs including the use of Assistive Technology in the area of Special Needs.

## School Provision

Our Lady’s is a co-educational voluntary secondary school which operates an open admissions’ policy. As the only provider of secondary education in the town, the school caters for a diverse student population. In pursuit of inclusive values the school strives to create a secure, accepting, collaborating and stimulating community in which everyone is valued and where every student is encouraged to achieve to the highest degree possible according to his/her potential. The school provision is closely aligned to the DES Continuum of Support, that is, Classroom Support (Whole School Support), School Support (Support for Some) and School Support Plus (Support for a Few).

**Classroom Support (Whole School Provision)**

Classroom Support is the most common response to emerging needs:

* The school operates a system of mixed ability teaching. At enrolment in first year all students are allocated to mixed ability classes .
* The school’s award systems is used to promote excellence in all areas of school life including behaviour and co-operation in class, academic excellence, willingness, initiative, and enterprise, sustained improvement in attitude/performance and good citizenship.
* Team teaching is provided to support student learning.
* Varied teaching methodologies
* Assessment for Learning Strategies
* CAT 4 (Cognitive Ability Test) prior to enrolment and in third year
* Results of standardised tests (Micro + Sigma) are transferred from primary school
* Termly reports are reviewed by the year head.
* DOT (Drumcondra Online Test) is administered to all second-year students
* Results of State Examinations are analysed
* School visits prior to enrolment
* School Experience Days
* Open Evening for new students
* Parent/Guardian information sessions prior to school commencement
* Induction Day (first years are the only students at school on the first day of term)
* Cairdeas – peer mentoring
* Broad subject choice
* SPHE & CSPE programme
* Friends for Life
* Active Teaching Methodologies
* Differentiated Curriculum
* Wellbeing programme (including guidance, Wellbeing week, Catholic Schools Week)
* Wide range of extra-curricular activities (Sport, Musical, Green Schools)
* Liturgical celebrations
* Supervised Study
* Learning to Learn Initiative (POKER as active study methodology)
* Mind mapping (Etch & Sketch)
* Study Plans
* Junior Cycle Awards Scheme
* Senior Cycle Awards Scheme
* Yearhead and Class Tutor System
* Visiting speakers and retreats
* Tutor time each day
* Student Council
* Student Journal
* School Policies (Student Attendance Strategy, Child Safeguarding Statement, Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy, Homework & Assessment Policy, Acceptable Use Policy)
* School Self-Evaluation Process
* Parents Council
* Modern well-equipped building including specialist rooms
* Excellent ICT Infrastructure including Wifi throughout the building
* Office 365

**School Support for Some (Support for Some)**

The subject teacher, the student, parent/guardian and SENCO will discuss the nature of the difficulty and consider strategies to support the student in his/her learning. The strategies may include the following:

* Student Support Plans
* Personal Pupil Plan
* Active Teaching Methodologies
* School Trips/excursions
* Differentiated Curriculum and reduced curriculum
* Modified Assessments
* Additional teaching classes in Literacy, Numeracy, Organisation Skills and Personal Development
* LCA programme
* Team teaching
* Ordinary Level examination papers
* Foundation level in English & Maths at Leaving Certificate Level
* Additional language classes in English
* iPads for student use
* Behaviour charts and monitoring
* Drop Everything and Read
* Consultation with parents/guardians
* One to one counselling sessions
* RACE applications
* Use of a reader/scribe in school exams
* Reasonable accommodations in State Examinations
* Referral to outside agencies (NEPS, NCSE, CAMS, TUSLA)

**School Support Plus (Support for a few)**

* Additional teaching in English, Maths and Personal Development
* Resource (one-to-one tuition)
* ASD class
* Student Support Plans
* Personal Pupil Plan
* Team teaching
* Psychometric testing (WRAT 4)
* One to one counselling sessions
* Meetings with parents/guardians
* SNA support
* Meetings with outside agencies (NEPS, NCSE, CAMS, TUSLA)
* Use of assistive technology
* RACE applications
* Use of a reader/scribe in school exams
* Reasonable accommodations in State Examinations
* Referral to outside agencies (NEPS, NCSE, CAMS, TUSLA)
* Behaviour Support Plans
* Handwriting Programme
* Role Play
* Colour coding for organisation
* Reduced curriculum
* Reduced school day
* Level 2 Learning Programme
* Use of quiet room
* Social Stories
* Picture exchange
* TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communications Handicapped Children)

**The SEN Team**

The SEN team comprises of the school Principal, Deputy Principal, Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), Guidance Counsellor, Learning Support Teachers, Subject Teachers and Special Needs Assistants.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

### Board of Mangement

* To ensure that the school has a comprehensive special educational needs policy in place that has been developed collaboratively with all the relevant partners, to monitor the implementation of that policy and to ensure its evaluation.
* To ensure that a broad, balanced, relevant and progressive curriculum is provided in the school.
* To ensure that necessary resources are sought on behalf of students with special educational needs.
* To ensure that the learning support/special educational needs policy forms part of the School Plan.

# *The Principal/Deputy Principal*

* The Principal has responsibility for all aspects of the day-to-day management of policy and provision for students with Special Educational Needs
* To appoint special educational needs co-ordinators from among the teaching staff and to work closely with the coordinators.
* To keep the Board of Management informed regarding issues of relevance to SEN.
* In consultation with the the Special Educational Needs co-ordinators to liaise with the Department of Education and Skills and other outside agencies.
* To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources including the allocation of hours and funds.

#### *Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo)*

The Assistant Principal has responsibility for leading the school’s inclusion programme and for coordinating SEN provision at Our Lady’s. Duties associated with this post include the following responsibilities:

* Promotion of a positive experience of school life for students with special educational needs
* Identification of students with special educational needs through consultation with feeder schools, teachers and parents/guardians and through use of appropriate testing
* Conduct of CATs for incoming first years
* Preparation and submission of applications to outside agencies (DES, NCSE, NEPS etc)
* Preparation and submission of Reasonable Accommodation Applications for the SEC
* Coordination of the work of teachers providing support for SEN students
* Review and evaluation of SEN provision in the school
* Communication with parents/guardians of SEN students as required.
* Liaising with outside agencies (NEPS, NCSE, CAMHS etc) as required.
* Managing the preparation of Support Plans and Care Plans for students as appropriate
* Advising teachers on appropriate programmes and interventions
* Collaboration with the middle leadership team and senior leadership team in the school.
* Provision of regular reports to the Principal and an annual report to the Board of Management.

# *SEN Team*

* The SEN in 2019/2020 includes Mai Healy(SENCo), Yvonne Meade, Siobhán Crowe, Louise Doyle, Aoife Campion and Natasha Keane.
* The SEN team provides diagnostic testing, monitoring and advice to subject teachers, students and parents/guardians as well as direct teaching for students who have SEN.
* The SEN team work collaboratively to create Student Support Files for SEN students.
* The SEN team is responsible in consultation with other relevant agencies and individuals for the development and delivery of the Student Support Plan (SSP).

***Subject Teachers providing additional teaching in Curriculum Access Classes***

* Provide additional teaching in literacy, numeracy, personal development, digital literacy and organisational skills to individual students and small groups.
* Become familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches and resources to cater for the learning styles of the SEN student(s).
* Assist in the implementation of the SSP.
* Meet with the SEN Team as required.
* Provide plans of work to the SEN Team.
* Team teach and provide in class support

###### *The General Teaching Staff*

###### The classroom teacher is responsible for the education all pupils in his/her class, including any pupils with a special education need. The teacher has a responsibility:

* To identify students with SEN.
* To become familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches and resources to cater for the learning styles of the SEN student(s).
* To make provision and differientate for students with SEN in their classes and subject areas.
* To inform the SENCo when a student is presenting with a learning difficulty.
* To accept an aural/electronic version of completed examinations and some homework assignments for correction.
* To provide the SENCo with completed examination scripts/class tests when required
* To provide data relating to the student’s progress in a particular subject when required (e.g. for Connor’s Rating, Psychological Assessments and Reasonable Accommodation for Certified Examinations).
* To be familiar with Educational Assessments and other relevant reports and materials in relation to students with SEN in their classes.
* To be part of a whole-school approach in relation to literacy and numeracy.
* To develop a positive ethos in the classroom for fostering an inclusive approach to meeting the social, emotional, behavioural and educational needs of SEN students.
* To team teacher and/or provide in-class support
* To identify training needs and to secure training where needed.
* To liaise with the SEN Team.

##### *Special Needs Assistants*

##### The Special Needs Assistants will liaise closely with staff, school management and outside agencies in relation to SEN students. Special Needs Assistants work closely with the SEN team and the individual subject teachers in the implementation of the school’s policy as it relates to individual students or groups of students with assessed SEN. In particular SNA’s play a very important role in ensuring the health and safety of the students and in their social and emotional development.

##### The SNA will

* Provide assistance with feeding and the administration of medication
* Provide assistance with toileting and general hygiene.
* Provide assistance with mobility and orientation to enable students to access safely all areas of the school building.
* Assist teachers with the supervision of students during assembly, recreation, dispersal from the classroom for one reason or another.
* Provide for care needs associated with specific medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, epileptic seizures or pupils with fragile health).
* Provide time out breaks for SEN students for safety, medical or personal care reasons.
* Provide assistance on out-of-school visits, walks, examinations and similar activities.

SNAs will also assist with:

* Preparation and organisation of classrooms.
* Typing, writing and use of technological equipment for SEN students.
* The development of Personal Pupil Plans for SEN students
* The maintenance of records associated with SEN students

Parents’/Guardians’– Involvement and Support

The school recognises the parent(s)/guardian(s) as the primary educator(s) of the student. Parental permission will be sought before a student is offered additional supports. Contact with parents/guardians will be made by telephone, letter, e-mail, or in person. A member of the SEN team/yearhead will make the initial contact. In order to best support your son/daughter we request that parent(s)/guardian(s):

* Provide up-to-date reports and assessments with the student application form.
* Work in positive partnership with the school
* Work collaboratively with other agencies including NEPS, CAMHs, Early Intervention Teams
* Support and encourage the student in her/his education.
* Ensure that the student has a good attendance record.
* Attend meetings with school personnel as required.
* Co-operate with the school in the preparation and implementation of Support Plans and Personal Pupil Plans for students.
* Respond to requests for information in a timely manner.

A Three Step Process to Support SEN students

In Our Lady’s Secondary School, we will use the DES Continuum of Support Framework to engage in a three-step process in identifying and responding to the needs of our students. This framework recognises that SEN occurs along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe and short-term to long- term. Students require different levels of support depending on their individual needs.

Step One – Identification of Needs

The school aims to identify as soon as possible any SEN that the student may have. Parents/Guardians should provide all relevant information on enrolment. A smooth and effective transfer of pertinent information with regard to each individual’s special needs ensures that each student is provided with the relevant supports.

The following information is required prior to school entry:

* Completed Enrolment Form
* An up-to-date psycho-educational report and other professional reports (e.g. Occupational Therapy Report, Speech and Language Report, Medical Report)
* Student Education Passport
* Results of Standardised Tests
* Data collected from primary school teachers and transition meetings with feeder schools
* Completed Cognitive Ability Test (CAT 4) and contact with parents/guardians if deemed necessary following review of CAT 4 results
* Meeting with SENCo
* Other relevant information

Additional information will become available through the following channels

* Teacher observations and student referral to the SEN Team
* SEN Team meetings
* Year Team meetings
* Formal assessment (e.g. WRAT 4 and WIAT 3**)**

**School Support for Some**

* Psychological Assessments will transfer for students with diagnosed special needs
* Termly reports are reviewed by the yearhead and concerns in relation to student achievement are referred to the SEN team.
* Where an individual teacher is concerned about student progress he/she may refer a student to the SEN team.
* The Principal/Deputy Principal may refer students to the SEN team
* Individual students may self-refer to the SEN team
* Parents/guardians may refer a student to the SEN team
* The guidance counsellor may refer a student to the SEN team
* The WIAT 111 is administered by the SEN team
* Robin Hedderley sentence completion and handwriting test is administered by the SEN team
* Results of the Junior Certificate Examinations are analysed.

**Step 2 - Meeting Needs**

* Once SEN students have been identified through the process outlined in Step 1, a Student Support File will be created for each of those students in response to their individual needs. These files will be created through a collaborative process involving the SEN Team, Subject Teachers, parents, the student and in some instances external professionals.
* The Student Support File will allow the SENCo, SEN Team and Subject Teachers to document progress over time and will help them to provide the appropriate level of support to students in order to meet their needs.
* Following a period of intervention, progress will be monitored and reviewed, and a decision will be made in relation to the category of support required; Classroom Support, School Support for Some, School Support Plus.
* A summary document of the student’s Support Plan will be added to their profile on VSware so that all relevant teachers will have access to the information.
* Each SEN student’s Student Support File will be stored in their individual files in a locked SEN filing cabinet in the Deputy Principal’s office.
* Student Support Plans will set out agreed targets and strategies. These will help teachers to differentiate their subject teaching to meet the needs of their students and to set specific targets related to their class.
* Short – term needs will be met through classroom support initiated by Subject Teachers through differentiation and team - teaching.
* Individualised support will be provided for students with more complex needs by the SEN Team and Subject Teachers providing additional teaching (curriculum access).
* The needs of SEN students in Our Lady’s will be supported on the basis of a continuum as follows:

**Classroom Support**

* Classroom support will be the most common response to emerging needs. Subject teacher, student, parent/guardian and SENCo will discuss the nature of the problem and develop strategies which may be effective.

The Review Process

* Review of Classroom Support will involve the Subject Teacher, parents/guardians and student and will focus on progress made by the student.

**School Support**

* Where classroom support is not enough to fully meet the needs of the student the subject teacher will involve the SENCo and request support.
* All relevant information will be gathered through formal and informal assessment and a Support Plan will be created. This plan will set out the nature of the student’s learning difficulties, define learning targets and set a timescale for review. The plan will be co – ordinated by the SEN Team.

The Review Process

* Review will focus on the student progress and will include the views Subject Teachers, Subject Teachers providing additional support, SEN Team, parents/guardians and student.

**School Support Plus**

* If the student’s needs are severe and persistent the SEN Team will liaise with student, parents/guardians, Subject Teachers, Subject Teachers providing additional support and external agencies. A Support Plan will be drawn up based on all the information gathered.

The Review Process

* The SEN Team will carry out a review together with student, parent/guardian, subject teachers, subject teachers providing additional support (curriculum access) and external agencies in order to identify progress made by student.

**Step 3 – Monitor and Recording Outcomes**

* Students’ progress in relation to achieving their targets will be regularly and carefully monitored through the processes involved within Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus.
* This will be achieved through formal and informal assessments, observations, checklists, samples of work and reports from subject teachers, tutors, Year Heads, parents/guardians and students.
* This will lead to the creation of specific targets and the development of a defined timeframe for achievement. The details of the process are outlined below;
  + Determining the current level of performance
  + Identify specific time bound strategies
  + Measure progress
* Monitoring outcomes is part of a dynamic process of identification, target-setting, intervention and review, which in turn should lead to adjustments in support plans.
* The Student Support File will be used to track the student’s pathway through the Continuum of Support. Our Student Support File is based on the NEPS template. All communication in relation to the student will be recorded and filed in the Student Support File.

# Procedures for the development of Student Support Plan

The Education for People with Special Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004 provides for the provision of Individual Education Plans (IEP) for students with special educational needs. In preparing the IEP the Principal must ensure that the parents/guardians, Area Special Education Needs Organiser (S.E.N.O.) and other appropriate people are consulted. Their implementation has been delayed pending the provision of adequate funding and training for personnel involved. However, the school is committed to the provision of Student Support Plans for students with special educational needs, as far as possible, subject to the limitations of time and resources.

The following procedure is in place:

* Application forms, relevant reports, assessments etc are collected and reviewed.
* Consulation is conducted with relevant parties including, primary school teachers, SENO, parents/guardians, subject teachers, yearhead and SENCo
* A meeting is held with the SEN student to identify their priority learning needs.
* A plan is formulated with a view to supporting the SEN student in the school
* The plan includes the following: student details, summary of assessments and recommendations, strengths, learning needs, targets to be reached each term. Proposed date for review of plan.
* A follow up meeting is held with the SEN student to explain targets and to agree strategies that will be used.

The specific content of the plan will include the following:

* The nature and degree of the student’s abilities, skills and talents.
* The nature and degree of the student’s special educational needs and how those needs affect his/her educational development.
* Priority learning needs, targets and strategies that will be used to attain student goals.
* The Student Support Plan will be reviewed at regular intervals and at least once a year.
* The annual review includes the following:
  + Review of targets and attainment
  + Analysis of academic performance in exams
  + Consultation with teachers
  + Consultation with parents/guardians
  + Meeting with the student to identify targets reached and new priority learning needs
  + Update the Student Support Plan

***Exceptionally Able Students***

The school aims to make provision for exceptionally able students in the following ways:

* Class teachers, through differentiation provide relevant materials and challenges for exceptionally able students.
* The Student Awards Scheme rewards excellence in all areas of school life.
* Exceptionally able students are provided with information on programmes for exceptionally gifted and talented students at UL, DCU and elsewhere. Parents/Guardians are provided with details of courses available at the Centre for Talented Youth.
* Teachers use differentiated teaching, where the student remains with his/her peers, working with the same class material, but is afforded access to differentiated materials
* As part of their role, yearheads are responsible academic monitoring. They identify exceptionally able students, monitor their progress and encourage the students to reach their potential.
* The extra-curricular/co-curricular programmes provide opportunities for exceptionally able students to develop their skills e.g. debating competitions (UCC Philosophical Society), BT Young Scientist, YSI, Enterprise Competitions etc

**Transfer to Adult and Working Life**

Effective transfer of students with SEN to adult and working life is effected in a number of ways:

* Students of LCA and TY establish links with the world of work and with local employers through the work placement modules of these courses.
* The school’s guidance counsellor meets all senior cycle students individually and helps to identify training schemes, third level courses and suitable career opportunities for students with Special Educationl Needs.
* Assistance is given to SEN students where necessary to complete College and Job application forms.
* Information sessions and visiting speakers provide details of FETAC courses in Colleges of Further Education.

# Links with outside agencies

The Learning Support Department will liaise, as required, subject to legal restrictions, with various statutory and non-statutory bodies, which may include the following:

* Primary Schools
* Social Services
* G.P’s
* Health Service Executive
* Juvenile Liaison Officer
* Gardai
* Dyslexia Association (ACLD) – Branches in Cashel and Nenagh.
* County Library Services
* National Educational Psychological Services, NEPS
* Speech and language Therapists
* NCSE & SENO
* Reading Association and Learning Support Association of Ireland
* Special Education Support Service
* Middeltown Centre for Autism

**Record Keeping**

Our recording keeping procedures are informed by the General Data Protection Regulation (2018). All files relating to students with SEN are stored in secure filing cabinets in the Deputy Principal’s office. A summary of all assessment information is available for each student on their profile page on the SEN tab on VS Ware. Teachers can access this information for the students whom they teach. All meetings, phone calls and actions are logged in the student support file.

**Implementation and Review**

This policy was reviewed and updated during the school year 2018/2019. It will be implemented from September 2019 and will be reviewed in the school year 2021/2022.