

**Learning Support
& Resource Policy
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Aims of Learning Support

The principal aim of learning Support is to optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.

Subsidiary aims

- To enable these pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level
- To develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in these pupils
- To enable those pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners
- To provide supplementary teaching and additional support in English and Maths
- To involve parents in supporting their children through effective parent-support programmed
- To promote collaboration among teacher in the implementation of whole-school policies on learning support for these pupils.
- To establish early intervention programmes designed to enhance learning and to prevent / reduce difficulties in learning

Principles

Effective Learning programmes are based on the following principles:

- Effective whole-school policies and parental involvement
- Prevention of failure
- Provision of intensive early intervention
- Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need.

Staff roles and Responsibilities

The role of learning support is a collaborative responsibility shared by all- The Board of Management, Principal, Learning Support Teacher, Class teachers, parents and children. It is important that everyone contributes in the planning and implementation of our school plan on Learning support.

Role of Board of Management:

- To oversee the development, implementation and review of the provision on learning support in our school.
- Ensure adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the learning support teacher;

- Provide a secure facility for storage of records relation to pupils in receipt of special needs and learning support services.

Staged Approach:

The Staged approach, as recommended in Circular 24/03 shall be implemented as follows;

Stage 1;

If a class teacher/parent has concerns regarding a pupil's academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development, he/she devises a plan which aims to meet pupil's identified needs within the normal classroom setting. If concerns remain Stage 2 may be implemented.

Stage 2;

The child is now referred to the learning support teacher, with parental permission for further diagnostic testing. A learning plan is put in place if it is deemed necessary and the child may be withdrawn for a specified period of time for learning support. If significant concerns remain after a period of time, it may be necessary to implement Stage 3.

Stage 3;

The school now formally requests a consultation with an outside party and where appropriate, an assessment of needs from a specialist outside the school. Following this consultation a learning plan is devised, implemented and reviewed at regular intervals.

The parents are fully consulted throughout this process. Parental consent is obtained in writing – parents are required to sign a form accepting or rejecting supplementary help for their child.

Role of Principal

- Assume overall responsibility for the development for the development and implementation of the school's policies on learning support and special needs.
- Work with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan on learning support and special needs
- Monitor the implementation of the school plan on learning support and special needs on an on-going basis.
- Monitor the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with very low achievement.
- Assume direct responsibility for co-ordinating learning support and special needs services.
- Oversee the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need.

- Keep teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed in initiating referrals
- Help teachers increase their knowledge and skills in the area of learning support.

- **Role of class teacher**

The Class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in her class including those selected for supplementary teaching. In supporting the development and implementation of the school plan on learning support the class teacher should:

- Implement teaching programmes, which optimise the learning of all pupils and to the greatest extent possible, prevent the emergence of learning difficulties
- Implement the school policies on screening and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in English and in Mathematics from 1st to 6th class by administering and scoring appropriate screening measures [M.I.S.T, Sigma-T, Micra-T tests].
- Implement the Staged approach as per Circular 24/03, where there is a concern regarding a pupil's progress.
- For each pupils who is in receipt of supplementary teaching collaborate with the learning support teacher in the development of an individual profile and learning programme by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve those targets.
- For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, adjust the classroom programmes in line with the agreed learning targets and activities.

With regard to teaching pupils with low achievement, the following general approaches and methods are recommended:

- ❖ Group teaching
- ❖ Modify presentation and questioning techniques to maximise the involvement of pupils with low achievement in class activities
- ❖ Placing emphasis on Oral language development across the curriculum
- ❖ Providing pupils with extra tutoring in the key basic skills in literacy and numeracy
- ❖ Setting learning targets at an appropriate level
- ❖ Providing learning activities and materials which are suitably challenging but which are suitably challenging but which also ensure success and progress
- ❖ Carrying out error analyses of a pupil's work to pinpoint specific areas of difficulty
- ❖ Modify presentation and questioning techniques to maximise the involvement of pupils with low achievement in class activities

A key role of successful learning support is a very high level of consultation and co-operation between the class teacher and the learning support teacher. Central to this

consultation is the development, implementation and review of Individual Profile and Learning Programmes

Role of Learning Support Teacher

The activities of the learning support teacher should include:

- ❖ Assisting in the implementation of a broad range of whole-school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to prevent learning difficulties
- ❖ Development of individual profile and learning programme for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with the class teacher and parents.
- ❖ Delivering intensive early intervention programmes and providing supplementary teaching in English and Mathematics to pupils in the junior section of the school [Senior infants to 2nd class]
- ❖ Providing teaching in English and Mathematics to pupils in the senior section of the school who experience low achievement
- ❖ Co-ordinating the implementation of whole-school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching in line with the selection criteria specified in our school plan and input from teachers and parents, while also taking account of the Staged approach.
- ❖ Contributing to the development of policy on learning at the whole school level.
- ❖ Providing advice to class teacher in such areas as individual pupil assessment and programme planning, as well as approaches to language development, reading, writing, and mathematics for pupils experiencing difficulties
- ❖ Contributing at the school level to decision making regarding the purchase of learning resources books and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms and in the learning support teacher's room.
- ❖ Performing a defined role in co-ordinating the provision of special needs and learning support services in the school.
- ❖ Liaising with external agencies such as psychologist to arrange assessments and special provision for pupils with special needs
- ❖ Maintaining a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and special educational need

Internal Provision

Prevention Strategies

Our strategies for preventing learning difficulties are

- ❖ Development of agreed approaches to language development and to teaching other aspects of English and Mathematics in order to ensure progression and continuity from class to class
- ❖ Provision of additional support in language development and relevant early literacy and mathematical skills to pupils who need it;
- ❖ Implementation of a whole school parent involvement programme that focuses on developing children's oral language skills, shared books with children and developing their early mathematical skills
- ❖ Implementation of paired reading programmes involving adults /parents and pupils in the school

Early Intervention Programmes

- ❖ Implementation of intensive early intervention programmes in the early primary classes as an effective response to meeting the needs of children with low achievement. These programmes will
- ❖ Be set within a specified time frame [13-20 weeks or per term]
- ❖ Will be based on a shared expectation of success by everyone involved
- ❖ Involve small group teaching or one- to one teaching whichever suits the needs of the pupil.
- ❖ Include a strong focus on oral language and laying the foundation for meaningful reading
- ❖ Emphasise phonemic awareness
- ❖ Engage the pupils in frequent supervised oral and silent reading of texts at appropriate levels of difficulty and monitor their comprehension
- ❖ Stress the interconnected nature of listening speaking, reading and writing.
- ❖ In Mathematics they focus on language development and the development of mathematical procedures and concepts.

Screening, Selection, Assessment and Review

Identification and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching:

- ❖ Preliminary screening of pupils will be initiated by administering the Belfield Infant Assessment Profile in the Junior Infant class during the 2/3 term. This will assist teachers in identifying the particular strengths and needs of the children.
- ❖ The M.I.S.T. (Middle Infant Screening Test) will be administered in the Senior Infant class towards the end of the school year as a diagnostic tool and to assist with the identification of children in need of learning support in Literacy.
- ❖ The N.R.I.T (Non Reading Intelligence Test) will be administered in First class to enable the teacher to gain further information regarding pupil's ability.
- ❖ The M.I.C.R.A-T/S.I.G.M.A-T tests will be administered during the last term of the school year, with all children in classes from first to sixth as a screening measure.
- ❖ Children who score at or below the 40th percentile, in collaboration with the class teacher and with parental consent will be referred to the Learning support teacher for further diagnostic assessment. Jackson Phonic test, Neale Analysis, D.S.T, N.A.R.A, Maths Error Analysis, O.W.L.S testing are some of the tests carried out to identify the pupil's learning needs.

Order of children to receive learning support based on assessment

- ❖ Children performing below the 40th percentile in Standardised test of achievement in English and Maths.
- ❖ Senior Infants / First class – early intervention programmes for low achievers in English and Maths based on class teacher's observations and recommendations.
- ❖ Arrangements for providing supplementary teaching to pupils in the senior section who experience very low achievement.
- ❖ The duration of supplementary teaching should not exceed two to three years
- ❖ Ad-hoc support for children who need extra interventions in certain aspects of both the Mathematics and English curriculum.

Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching

- ❖ An in-depth review of a pupil's progress should be organised by the learning support teacher at the end of each instructional term to determine whether or not agreed learning targets have been achieved and to decide on the level of

supplementary teaching, if any, which should be provided in the following instructional term.

- ❖ This involves some or all of the following; administering or re-administering diagnostic or achievement tests, collaboration with class teacher and parents.
- ❖ A decision regarding further provision of supplementary teaching should be made taking into account the pupil's learning needs and the needs of other pupils in the school cluster who have very low achievement.

Monitoring Progress

- ❖ On-going 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 by class teacher.
- ❖ Formative testing and observation of work by class teacher.
- ❖ Implement the school policies on screening and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in English and in Mathematics by administering and scoring appropriate screening measures [Micra –T/ Drumcondra reading test/ Drumcondra maths test /Sigma –T/ Profiles and rating scales] each year in May/June.
- ❖ Standardised and diagnostic testing by Learning support teacher.
- ❖ Record keeping- Children have a file where records test results and assessments are kept in a secure filing cabinet.

Liaising with Parents

Effective communication with parents is critically important to the success of a Learning support programme. Activities that may be organised to increase the involvement of parents in supporting their children's learning, particularly parents in the learning support programme:

- The purpose and procedures of the school's learning support team
- Paired/shared reading
- Developing children's oral language through discussion
- Motivating children to read more
- Creating a home environment where literacy can thrive
- Selecting books that interest children
- Developing children's reasoning and problem solving
- Counting, measuring and other activities involving number
- Playing board games at home to support counting and problem solving skills in Maths.

Class teacher

Once a pupil has come to the attention of the school because of low achievement it will be possible for the class teacher in the context of on-going contact with the

pupil's parents to make them aware of the situation and to ascertain the parent's views about the child's performance at school.
Seek the parent's approval to proceed with diagnostic assessment, which may lead to supplementary teaching. When a child is selected for Learning Support the parents must accept or decline the place in writing.

The learning support teacher:

- ❖ Should meet with the parents of each pupil who has been selected for diagnostic assessment
- ❖ Should meet to discuss the results of assessments/ the learning targets in the child's Individual Profile and Learning Programme / the ways in which attainment of the targets can be supported.

Monitoring and reviewing of policy

Monitoring of learning Support is an on-going procedure. The policy is revised regularly by staff and the Board of Management. This policy was last reviewed in
