



CARLOW VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

KILKENNY ROAD
CARLOW

Special Educational Needs Policy

Scope

This is a whole-school policy that reflects a whole school approach where a child with special educational needs, subject to resources and places being available, shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with-

- (a) the best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under this Act, or
- (b) the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated.¹

Relationship to the School's Mission/Vision/Aims

Administration, staff and parents at Carlow Vocational School seek to promote a secure and caring community environment and a well-balanced curriculum which is student centred, with parents recognized as the first educators and teachers as facilitators of the learning process. In partnership, we hope to provide an atmosphere, which encourages respect, responsibility and commitment, drawing forth the positive potential of each individual, thus equipping all students to take their place in life and work in the future.

Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures and practices that are in place to enable a student to participate and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical,

¹ Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Bill 2003, 2.

sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition.²

Goals

- The policy ensures that students with special educational needs can avail of, and benefit from the most appropriate education, as do their peers, who do not have such needs.
- It facilitates students with special educational needs to leave school with the optimum self-esteem, knowledge, skills and qualifications.
- It therefore enables them to participate, to the level of their capacity, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives.

Policy Content

Introduction

The school prospectus describes the courses, supports and extra curricular activities provided for second level students. It describes the courses at Junior Cycle, which include the Junior Certificate and the Junior Certificate School Programme. It describes the courses at Senior Cycle, which includes Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and Work Experience.

The Supports include Learning Support, Resource Teaching, Supervised Study, Pastoral Care, Guidance and Counselling, Parental Involvement, the work of the Home School Community Liaison Officer and the School Completion Programme.

The extra curricular activities include sports & games programmes, educational trips, student clubs & societies, cultural activities, life skills & recreational programmes.

The school is committed to developing an atmosphere of inclusiveness, respect, tolerance and the acceptance of diversity. It recognizes the need for an inclusive curriculum and regards the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy as an essential benchmark for all students. The school has a strong commitment to meeting the needs of students with special educational needs. It currently avails of the services of a Guidance Counsellor and Resource Teacher.

Incoming first year students take a series of formal, group, standardized entrance assessments, administered by the school Guidance Counsellor and Resource Teacher. Incoming students are required to furnish all relevant reports to facilitate transfer to Carlow Vocation al School. Following thorough appraisal of the results, along with other relevant information, students are placed in appropriate classes, which are streamed for core subjects and mixed ability where there is subject choice.

² Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Bill 2003, 1.

Procedures

The following structures and procedures support students with special educational needs and facilitate, as much as possible, their inclusion in all aspects of school life. The Guidance Counsellor and Resource Teacher undertake the implementation of many of these procedures, but work in close co-operation with other key personnel.

Early Identification

Students with special educational needs are identified as early as possible. Identification follows: interpretation of entrance assessments, receipt of copies of relevant psychological & educational reports, receipt of medical reports and individual educational plans and relevant information from parents and primary schools.

Transfer

Close co-operation with parents is considered paramount at the transfer from primary to post-primary stage. In addition, co-operation with social and health service agencies, which are involved with the student and/or their family takes place. The transfer of pertinent information, with regards to the individual's levels of attainment, effective teaching strategies, resources in use, learning styles and specific learning difficulties are ensured through National School teacher profiling and meetings in August with parents.

Selection of Students for Special Education

The selection of students for additional support is based on information gained during the Early Identification process above. Students receive the support hours granted through NCSE. The Guidance Counsellor and Resource Teacher co-operate in the selection procedures for these students.

Intervention begins as soon as NCSE allocates hours and the documentation permits.

Planning

The Resource Teacher assesses individual needs of student and devise an Education Plan consistent with that student's needs and resources provided by NCSE.

Involvement of Parents

The parents of students with special educational needs are invited to meet the Guidance Counsellor, Resource Teacher and SNA before an individual programme is formulated. Their views and recommendations are paramount at this stage, consistent with the school Mission Statement.

The Guidance Counsellor and Resource Teacher informs parents regarding their child's placement in class. The Guidance Counsellor and Resource Teacher keep parents informed regularly concerning their child's strengths, difficulties and progress.

Involvement of Students

The Guidance Counsellor / Resource Teacher inform students regarding their placement in class and their progress. The Guidance Counsellor / Resource Teacher discuss education plans with students, as they are being formulated, accommodating their views as much as possible.

Assessment and Reporting

Students in 3rd year and 6th year are formally assessed twice a year. They sit Christmas tests, Mock Examinations and State Examinations. All other students are formally assessed twice a year. In addition, all students are informally assessed, at regular intervals throughout the year, by subject teachers. Formal assessments are organized and time-tabled by Deputy Principal. Subject teachers and Class Tutors discuss the results of these tests with individual students and with their parents. The results of formal tests are available in the school office for reference by subject teachers, Class Tutors, Year Heads and parents.

The results of informal tests are kept by subject teachers. Teachers are mindful of the negative effects failure and poor results can have on students with special educational needs and therefore they use care and sensitivity when assessing. The Guidance Counsellor / Resource Teacher monitor the effectiveness of the student's placement within certain programmes and the effectiveness of other special interventions, in consultation with teaching teams.

Certification

At junior cycle, students may receive the Junior Certificate awarded by the DES, the Junior Certificate School Programme Certificate of Statements awarded by the DES. At senior cycle, students may receive the Leaving Certificate awarded by the DES, the Leaving Certificate Vocational awarded by the DES.

Roles and Responsibilities

The decision-making processes, in relation to students with special educational needs, is consultative, shared and collaborative. The Special Educational Needs Team comprising of the Guidance Counsellor, Resource Teacher(s), plus the Pastoral Care Team carry much of this responsibility. However, key personnel undertake responsibility for implementing specific procedures:

The Guidance Counsellor is responsible for administering, correcting and evaluating entrance assessments, organizing class groups, visiting feeder primary schools, liaising with parents, receiving and evaluating educational and psychological reports, receiving medical reports, consulting with psychologists or other professionals and communicating relevant information to subject teachers.

The Resource Teacher(s) provides appropriate tuition to small groups or classes, mindful of teaching methodologies, learning styles, curriculum content and individual needs. Their work is generally centred around students with SLD and those with allocated resource hours. They make recommendations where appropriate, and liaise with the Principal in organising the work of the SNA.

The Junior Certificate Schools Programme Co-ordinator facilitates many initiatives, and organises a comprehensive Profiling System where student progress is recorded, on all levels, followed by appropriate responses.

The Subject teachers appreciate that students with special educational needs are included in both streamed and mixed ability classes and are mindful of teaching methodologies, learning styles, assessment for learning, curriculum content, individual needs and mindful of differentiated learning. The Resource Teacher(s) has regular contact with subject teachers.

The Class tutors have a dedicated responsibility for the pastoral care of the class in their charge and are acutely aware of students with special educational needs. See Role of the Class Tutor Appendix 2

The Year Heads have a dedicated responsibility for the overall well being of the year in their charge and are acutely aware of students with special educational needs. See Role of the Year Head Appendix 3

The Special Needs Assistants play a significant role in the inclusion of students with special educational needs into mainstream education. The SNA provides care / health and safety needs for students that have access to SNA support.

The Deputy Principal takes special cognisance of the requirements of students with special educational needs, when drawing up the school timetable and supplementary timetables.

The Principal delegates duties to key personnel. However, she has final responsibility for all decisions made and procedures pursued on behalf of students with special educational needs, refer to DES Circular 009/2012.

Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures

The Principal is responsible for ensuring, monitoring and evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of the policy, takes place. The Special Education Needs Team evaluates its effectiveness through consultation with staff, students and parents. A short written and/or oral report by the SENO is available to staff and the Board of Management annually.

Review Procedures

Following Evaluation, appropriate changes and improvements are made to the policy and its implementation.

Timeframe

This policy was reviewed in October 2013.
Modifications were made and ratified by Board of Management November 2013.
Published and circulated November 2013.

The above Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Carlow Vocational School at a meeting

In: _____(venue) On: _____(date)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Secretary, Board of Management)