

Saint Brendan's College, Belmullet, Co. Mayo

Additional Educational Needs (AEN) Policy





Additional Educational Needs Policy

Scope of Policy:

This policy applies to all students, their parents, staff and Board of Management.

Preamble:

The principles of inclusivity and respect are enshrined in St. Brendan's College School Statement of ethos and are lived out as much as possible in the day-to-day life of the school. St. Brendan's College is committed to providing the highest educational standards and facilities for our students. We aim to build a partnership between all those involved in the provision of a top-quality service – Mayo Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board, School Management, teachers, parents and pupils. This will enable our students to reach their full potential and prepare them for participation as good citizens in society.

Inherent to this is an understanding that individual needs or learning differences should not prevent a student from flourishing in St. Brendan's College. It is our aspiration that if a child is diagnosed as needing support, they will receive whatever assistance they require to enable them to thrive like any other student. This will involve a whole-school approach to supporting the child with individual needs.

Legislation

There have been many changes in the way special education is delivered in Ireland in recent decades. Some of the main changes have come about because a legislative framework has been put in place to address the needs of children with special educational needs. There are four key pieces of legislation which parents should be aware of.

This policy is in keeping with all of the below legislation that is outlined.

These are:

- The Education Act 2018
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The Equality Act 2015
- The Equal Status Act 2015
- The Freedom of Information Acts 2014
- The Disability Act 2005
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
- The Education (Welfare) Act 2000

- There are a number of other pieces of legislation which are also relevant to children and parents with special educational needs. These include Ireland's Data Protection Act 1988 and as amended in 2003, Equality Acts (Employment Equality Act 1998, the Equal Status Acts 2000 and as amended in the Equality Act 2004) and the Freedom of Information Act 1997 and its amendment, 2003.

Additional Educational Needs

“If a child does not learn in the way we teach, then we must teach him in the way in which he learns”.

In our Additional Educational Needs Department, we cater for the needs of children who for one reason or another are finding difficulty in coping with some area of the curriculum.

Students who need more individual help then can be given catered for mainstream class or tutored in small groups in the basic subjects or subjects with which they are having special difficulty.

However, there are students whose educational problems extend over the full curriculum and who in their previous school were being given extra tuition in a special class due to a specific learning difficulty in literacy and /or numeracy.

Similar provision is made in St. Brendan's College for students in this category.

Here, under the guidance of the AEN team, where members are specially qualified in this area, pupils can be assessed and receive the individual attention that they need and make use of the special books, special equipment and computer facilities available to them.

Whether a student's difficulty is a specific one or more general, the special needs tutor and staff work together to ensure that any pupil experiencing difficulties will reach his/her full potential.

Special Educational Needs

The term Special Educational Needs is defined in the Educational Act 1998 as “*The educational needs of students who have a disability and the educational needs of exceptionally able students*”.

This policy applies to students who are exceptional; gifted students, students with learning difficulties, students with disabilities and students who are at risk – personal, emotional, social or educational, in short students who may need additional help or support to enable them to derive the maximum benefit from school.

In St. Brendan’s College, we are dedicated to helping each student to achieve his/her individual potential with the provision of a quality system of special Educational Needs being central to this commitment.

Aims

Through the implementation of this policy, we strive to:

- Facilitate students to participate in a curriculum best suited to their ability.
- Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitude to school and learning.
- Enable students to monitor their own learning and become independent learners within their own ability.
- Involve parents in supporting their children’s learning.
- Promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole school policies on Special Educational Needs for these students.
- Give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children who have a disability or who have other special educational needs, as they relate to education.
- Provide, as far as is practicable and having regard to the resources available, a level and quality of education appropriate to the needs and abilities of all students in the school.
- Ensure that students with individual needs are educated in an inclusive environment, as far as possible.
- Affirm that students with special educational needs have the same right to avail of, and benefit from education as students who do not have those needs.

- Provide for the involvement of parents in the education of their children and in the decision making process in relation to their children.
- Co-operate and work closely with the National Council for Special Educational Needs (NCSE) and other agencies with regard to the education of students with special educational needs (Teresa Judge, Psychologist and SENO)
- 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 is developed and respected.
- Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the individual needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.
- Ensure that Special Educational Needs is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole School and community.
- Ensure that students with individual needs are offered a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Set high standards for students with special educational needs and provide them with appropriate guidance, encouraging them to achieve to their full potential.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at home and at home.
- Ensure the effective and efficient use of resources.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of practice in support of students with special educational needs.

Goals

St. Brendan's College shall strive to have in place appropriate channels of communication and procedures

- To identify the Special Educational Needs of all incoming 1st years. This is done through skills assessment tests where reading, maths and spelling are administered in February. The AEN team consults with parents, primary school and outside agencies to put the relevant supports in place.
- To review the additional educational needs of current students.
- To seek to provide for the needs identified.
- To record the projected and actual progress of Special Educational Needs pupils.

Within the constraints of available resources, all students with additional needs, who are admitted to the school shall have access to participate in and benefit from an education suitable to their needs. Level 1 and 2 Programmes are now available to students with certain criteria to enter. The school shall endeavour to seek adequate resources, equipment and accommodation from the Department of Education and Science and other relevant agencies. The school will make every effort to maximise the resources available to students with Special Educational Needs. These include Visiting Teachers, Resource Teachers, Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, Counsellors, Technical Aid and Equipment etc. The school will endeavour to provide access and accommodation for such personnel in the school building.

Assessment of Need

The school will assess the additional educational needs of students upon entry to the school and will reassess the needs of students from time to time. The school will also make an assessment of its capacity to respond adequately to those needs. Where a student condition or circumstances change in the course of their school career such a student may merit re-assessment and re-evaluation of suitable provision.

Entry to St. Brendan's College – New Students

Application for entry to St. Brendan's College is made on a standard application form. This form is designed to elicit relevant information about the additional needs of students and parents are required to make known their child's needs on the form. Where students have been assessed by a psychologist parents supply the details to the school and are asked to make a copy of any such assessment report available to the

Principal. Where a student has availed of any special tuition and/or resources at National School or Secondary School, the parents are required to make this known on the application form.

Students with Special Educational Needs are identified in a number of different ways:

- Information from primary school.
- Information from parents.
- Information from Psychological Reports, carried out in primary school and passed on by parents.
- Information from teachers - feedback from schoolwork and interaction gathered in various ways, eg: Feedback form, email, conversations.
- Students identified with possible learning difficulties are tested further e.g. Dyslexia Screening Test, in consultation with parents.
- Students who require further assessment are referred to an Educational Psychologist or Occupational Therapist.
- The school also endeavours to identify students who may be exceptionally gifted and accommodate their needs and interests.
- Using the Continuum of Support problem-solving process.
 - At St. Brendan's College, we offer the opportunity to take the CAT 4. This is done to identify strengths and needs in the areas of verbal, quantitative, non-verbal and spatial. This data is used to help identify students who may need additional support, including the exceptionally able. It also acts as a guide for parents and students in the area of subject choice. The CAT 4 provides a Group Report for Teachers, Individual Student Report for Teachers and Parent Report
 - All students in 1st year are encouraged to complete a skills assessment day in February where they complete the WRAT5 maths, spellings and reading tests. This gives a standard score for the individual student. These scores are useful for both Maths and English teachers and to identify students that may need accommodations in state exams.
 - A new standardised test called the PPAD-E is used in October of each year, which has recently been developed by the Department of Education and Skills, through the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) in collaboration with the Educational Research Centre (ERC). The Post-Primary Assessment and Diagnosis – English (PPAD-E) is a new standardised test in for

use in post-primary schools as a screening and diagnostic tool for assessing literacy skills.

The test is:

- culturally appropriate and tailored to the Irish context
 - designed for use by teachers
 - helpful for screening for difficulties (particularly at first year intake)
 - useful in diagnostic assessment, monitoring and evaluating progress
 - can help identify if further assessment might be needed (e.g. speech & language)
 - helpful in contributing to the processes for RACE/ DARE/ Exemption from Irish
 - useful in establishing and reviewing literacy standards
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- 1st year students also complete the New Group Reading Test. This gives a standard score and a reading age. This test is very useful to make teachers aware of the reading ability of students and if there is a need for accommodations at state exams.
 - All of the assessments prior to, and during 1st year enables teachers to become very informed of student's areas of need. Where it is considered necessary a student support file is compiled to ensure necessary information is gathered, appropriate targets are set for the student and support is put in place.
 - Students are supported in an inclusive manner in St. Brendan's College offering differentiated teaching in a range of subjects. Where it is deemed necessary, the form of support may be on a one to one basis or in a small group setting. At St. Brendan's we strive to provide opportunity for all students to meet their full potential. Learning support is an integral part of the timetable for students with Special Educational Needs. Students will receive support, subject to hours received from the Department of Education and Skills.
 - Further assessment is done with students in 2nd year and throughout their time at St. Brendan's in an effort to track student's progress and highlight any arising needs.
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- Students who are achieving below the 10th percentile in literacy and numeracy may be selected for further diagnostic assessments.
 - On the other hand, having liaised with the relevant staff, the SENCO may decide that the student's needs do not merit their involvement. In many cases, a student's needs are resolved through the provision of differentiated work suited to their needs.

- If considered appropriate, these students' parents will be offered the opportunity for their child to avail of the appropriate Learning Support or Resource Teaching.
- Further referrals may be made to outside agencies i.e. the NCSE, NEPS, HSE – where it is deemed appropriate by the SENCO or Principal, in consultation with parents and the SENO.

Following consultation and the school is satisfied that appropriate measures can be taken to attempt to cater for the needs of the student; the student will be accepted into the school subject to the following:

- The necessary resources are made available by the Department of Education and Science and any other relevant agencies.
- Parents/Guardians co-operate with the school to ensure that the students; needs are met as fully as possible and that they supply further information from time to time as may be required.
- The student is well behaved and that the behaviour of the student will not / does not interfere with the progress of lessons or with the rights of other students to their education.

Where a student is refused admission parents will be advised of their rights of appeal as prescribed by the 1998 Education Act. Once admitted appropriate measures will be taken by the school with a view to endeavouring to provide for the student's needs.

Circular 0064/2024, issued by the Department of Education on December 10, 2024, provides updated guidelines for the operation, application, and deployment of Special Education Teacher (SET) resources in Irish schools. This circular supersedes Circulars 13/2017 and 14/2017 and aims to enhance the support for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream education.

Key Aspects of Circular 0064/2024

1. Principles Underpinning the SET Model

The guidelines are grounded in eight core principles that promote an inclusive education system. These principles emphasise:

- **Inclusive Education:** Ensuring all students, regardless of their needs, can access and participate in education.
- **Inclusive School Culture:** Fostering an environment where all students feel valued and supported.
- **Collaboration:** Encouraging teamwork among educators, parents, and students to support learning and development.

2. Deployment of SET Resources

Schools are required to:

- **Develop a SET Provision Plan:** This plan outlines how SET resources will be allocated to meet the needs of students with SEN.
- **Maintain a Schedule of Deployment:** A record that tracks the use of SET hours across the Continuum of Support, ensuring resources are directed appropriately.
- **Report to the Board of Management (BOM):** The principal must provide an annual report to the BOM detailing the use of SET resources, using the optional template provided in Appendix A of the circular

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The circular delineates the roles of various stakeholders:

- **Principal:** Oversees the implementation of the SET model and ensures compliance with the guidelines.
- **Board of Management:** Supports and monitors the deployment of SET resources.
- **Class Teachers:** Collaborate in identifying student needs and planning interventions.
- **SET Coordinators:** Coordinate the delivery of special education supports and liaise with all stakeholders.

4. Student Support Files and Plans

Schools must maintain comprehensive Student Support Files that document Student Support Plans: Individualised plans outlining specific interventions and supports.

- **Review and Monitoring:** Regular assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and make necessary adjustments.

5. Parental and Student Involvement

The guidelines emphasise the importance of involving parents and students in the SEN process:

- Parental Engagement: Schools should actively involve parents in the development and review of support plans.
- Student Voice: Encouraging students to participate in discussions about their learning and support needs, in an age-appropriate manner.

6. Indicators of Effective Practice

The circular introduces indicators to help schools assess the effectiveness of their SEN provision. These include:

- Quality of Interventions: Ensuring that interventions are evidence-based and tailored to individual needs.
- Monitoring and Review: Regular evaluation of the impact of interventions and making adjustments as necessary.
- Professional Development: Ongoing training for staff to enhance their capacity to support students with SEN.

Implications for SEN Coordinators

As a professional SEN Coordinator, your role is pivotal in implementing the directives of Circular 0064/2024:

- Strategic Planning: Develop and oversee the SET Provision Plan, ensuring it aligns with the school's overall educational objectives.
- Resource Management: Monitor the deployment of SET resources to ensure they are used effectively and in accordance with the guidelines.
- Collaboration: Facilitate communication among teachers, parents, and external agencies to provide cohesive support for students.
- Professional Development: Organise training sessions to keep staff informed about best practices in special education.
- Advocacy: Represent the needs of students with SEN in school leadership discussions and decision-making processes

Access to Learning Support

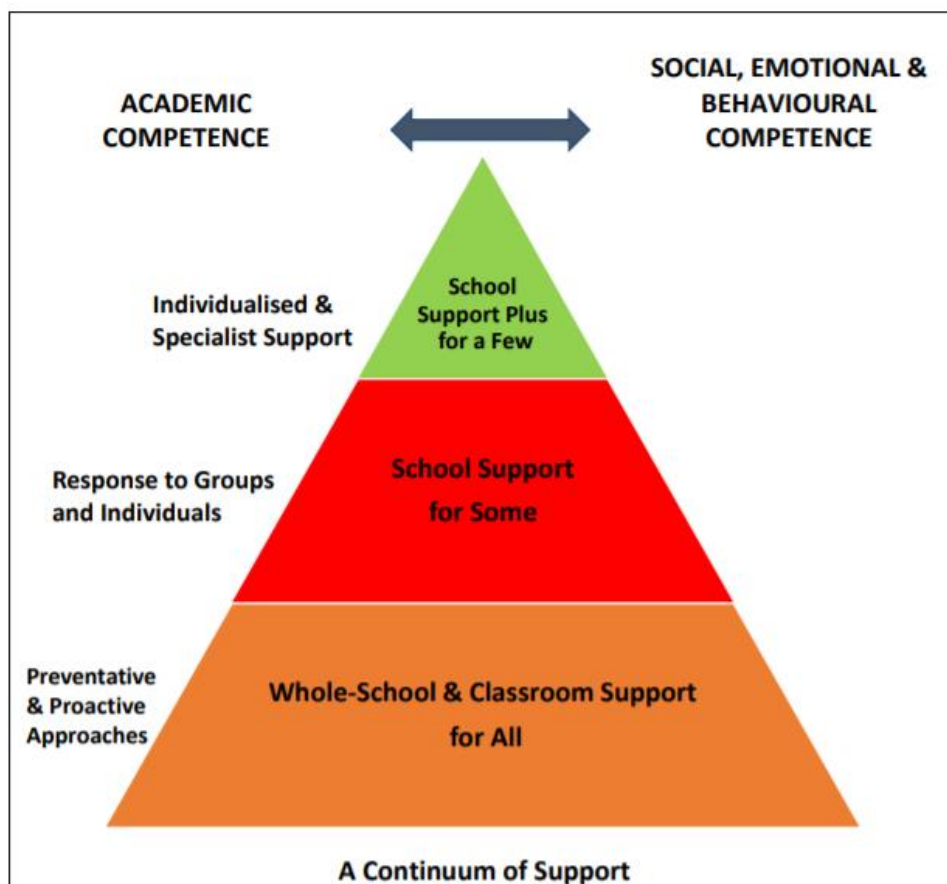


Table 1: Identification of Educational Needs through the Continuum of Support Process

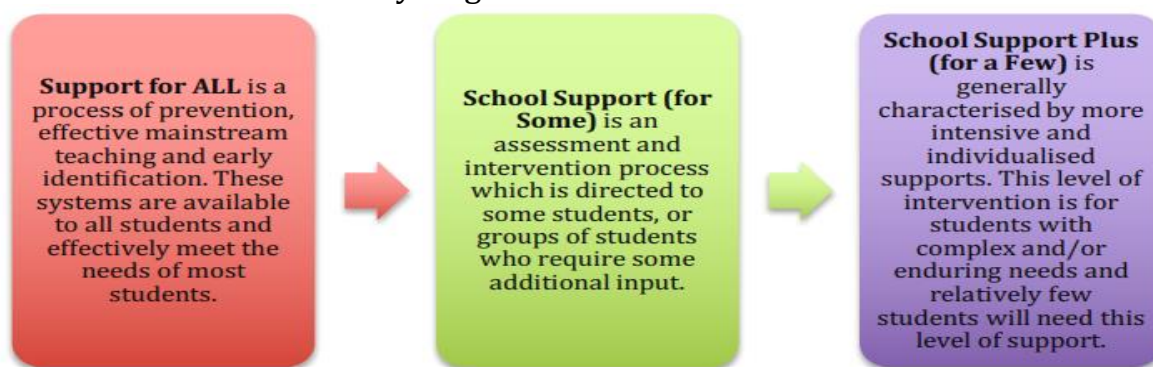
Classroom Support	<p>The class teacher considers how to differentiate the learning programme effectively to accommodate the needs of all pupils in the class.</p> <p>A classroom support plan is developed and / or adjusted over time for those pupils who do not respond appropriately to the differentiated programme.</p> <p>This is informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parental consultation• Teacher observation records• Teacher-designed measures /assessments• Basic needs checklist *• Learning environment checklist*• Pupil consultation - My Thoughts About School Checklist• Literacy and numeracy tests• Screening tests of language skills <p>A Classroom Support plan runs for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.</p>
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School Support	<p>At this level a Support Plan is devised and informed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher observation records • Teacher-designed measures / assessments • Parent and pupil interviews • Learning environment checklist • Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy • Formal observation of behaviour including ABC charts, frequency measures • Functional assessment as appropriate, including screening measure for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties <p>A support plan at this level may detail suitable teaching approaches including team-teaching, small group or individual tuition.</p> <p>A School Support Plan operates for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.</p>
School Support Plus	<p>This level of the Continuum is informed by a detailed, systematic approach to information gathering and assessment using a broad range of formal and informal assessment tools, reports from outside professionals (as appropriate) and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher observation and teacher-designed measures • Parent and pupil interviews • Functional assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of standardised testing such as measures of cognitive ability; social, emotional and behavioural functioning; adaptive functioning etc. <p>Data generated from this process are then used to plan an appropriate intervention and can serve as a baseline against which to map progress.</p> <p>A support plan at this level is likely to be more detailed and individualised, and to include longer term planning and consultation.</p>

The following groups of students have access to Learning Support in our school. We are very fortunate in being able to offer support to all our students at both Junior and Senior Cycle.

- Students who have had a psychological assessment, which recommends Learning Support.
- Students who have a Specific Learning Difficulty or a General Learning Difficulty.

- Students who have a Physical Disability.
- Students with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
- Students who received Learning Support at Primary school.
- Students identified in the initial screening tests.
- Students identified by their teachers or parents as struggling with one or more subjects.
- Students with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Students who may be gifted in one or more areas.



The level and nature of support should reflect the specific needs of students as set out in their support plans and be informed by careful monitoring and review of progress. We endeavour to allocate special education teaching supports according to identified needs, ensuring those with the highest level of need have access to the greatest level of support.

Ongoing Assessment of Current Students

The school will review the needs of students from time to time, including those who were deemed at entry to have Additional Educational Needs and those who were not. If the AEN Department decides that a student would benefit from further intervention, they will assess the student informally. Parents are informed and their consent is sought prior to any assessment-taking place. The outcome of this assessment will determine what course of action is taken.

The results of the assessment may indicate that a student does not have a learning difficulty.

- In this case the student's needs are supported through the structures available to all students, such as mentoring/monitoring by Year Head, support from the

Guidance Counsellor, HSCL Officer, review of entry levels for State Examinations, etc.

- If the results of the assessment indicate that a student has a learning difficulty a decision may be made to refer the student for a formal Psychological Assessment e.g. to NEPS, or to allocate that student Learning Support hours.
- In its operations, the School shall be guided by the NEPS-recommended guidelines for establishing a continuum of assessment and support.

Additional Educational Needs Provision in St. Brendan's College:

The AEN Team in St. Brendan's comprises of Resource Teachers, Learning Support Teachers, Principal, Deputy Principal, AEN Co-ordinator, HSCL, Career Guidance Teacher and the Special Needs Assistants. The aim of the team is to ensure access for all Special Educational Needs students to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, which offers development and progression in learning and experience. There is acceptance and respect for individuals regardless of ability, impairment, race or gender.

The function and roles of teachers in the Special Educational Needs Department include teaching, assessing and profiling students with Special Educational Needs, formulating and implementing education programmes, Liaison, support to teachers and monitoring of students' progress. Meetings are scheduled to record, review and update relevant reports and issues. **Such issues are dealt with at the AEN Team meetings that takes place every week in the school.**

Once students have been identified with learning difficulties they are profiled, Individual Educational Programmes will be formulated and implemented. Students are withdrawn from mainstream classes.

Time spent in the Special Educational Needs Department, withdrawal from mainstream classes will enable students to:

- Benefit from one to one and /or small group instruction/team teaching in their specific area of difficulty
- Become more confident in the abilities they do have.
- Develop good study skills
- Spend time revising knowledge and practising skills encountered during specific subject classes.
- Develop confidence in the use of ICT

- Take a greater responsibility for their own learning.

Modes of Provision of Learning Support

There is a mixed ability policy in place in the school. Mixed ability teaching strategies have been introduced and are currently being expanded upon; ongoing training is provided for teachers.

- Individual classes are used only where a student requires specialised individual support.
- Small group classes are the preferred method of provision with most students in resource and learning support getting their allocation in small groups. Groups are arranged based on similar need profiles and the capacity to withdraw students at the same time. Withdrawal for small groups usually occurs during Irish for those students who are exempt.
- Small subject classes are used where groups of students are given Maths, Irish and English learning support at the same time as other students are studying these subjects to allow for a foundation class or a supported pass class in these core subjects.
- Modified Timetable. A small number of students, whom it is deemed, after consultation with the NEPS psychologist, parents and teachers cannot sustain a full curriculum, have their timetable reduced. In as far as, possible, extra learning support or more classes in remaining subjects are provided.
- Team teaching: Learning support teacher or other teachers will assist class teacher with one or two students who may need individual help or assistance in the classroom situation for a variety of reasons.
- The Learning Support teacher meets with class teachers and other teachers to discuss matters relating to students with Special Educational Needs.
- The AEN Coordinator and Principal in conjunction with the subject teachers prepares a Continuum of Support for each AEN student. These plans are reviewed and updated regularly.
- Students with AEN have access to the full resources of the school.

The school will seek appropriate resources from the Department of Education and Science and other relevant agencies to meet the needs identified. Timetabled access to supplementary teaching is generally during Junior Cycle years. Access to individual students may be arranged at Senior Cycle where it is considered necessary.

Certain categories of student may be entitled to additional support e.g. non-national students, traveller children etc. The school will take steps to assess the needs of those students and will use the resources provided to meet those needs.

Students of exceptional ability are catered for in their regular banded groups. However, at Junior Cycle in Irish, English and Maths, classes are run concurrently from second year onwards at least, to enable separate Higher Level and Ordinary Level classes to be formed

Students with serious learning difficulties are recommended to take a reduced Junior Cycle curriculum. At Senior Cycle students may opt for regular Leaving Certificate, or one can complete Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Transition Year is also on offer. Supplementary teaching is offered where applicable.

As of January 2017, the SEN Co-ordinator can run modules in Level 3 QQI awards for specific students who may not be able to access the Leaving Certificate. The modules covered through QQI will be recognised and each student who participated in the QQI modules will receive qualified certification. However as of the year 2025, we have been informed that Level 1 and Level 2 will be offered for the Leaving Certificate.

Selection of Pupils for Supplementary Teaching

1. Priority is given to those with Psychological Reports who met requirements, which entitle them to Resource Teaching hours. (Department of Education and Science approved).
2. Students who show significant discrepancy between actual and expected performance.
3. Students reforming below average in standardised test in literacy and or ability
4. Students who are experiencing very low achievement.
5. Students who have fallen behind in mainstream curriculum subjects

Students

The students themselves are the other crucial link in the chain. They are expected to contribute to the drawing up of learning programmes and the setting of learning targets for themselves, to contribute to the review of these programmes and to participate wholeheartedly in them.

Parental Approval

Parental Approval is sought to proceed with diagnostic assessment, which may lead to supplementary teaching.

Timetabling

- The provision of learning Support and/or Resource Hours is in addition to regular subject teaching.
- Provision of supplementary teaching operates in response to the needs of the individual student.
- Priority is given to those students whose achievement is lower in standardised tests and /or those who are not coping with mainstream curriculum.
- Effort is made to ensure that students do not miss out on their weakest curricular area each time they attend Learning Support or Resource.

Referrals

- If a student has been receiving supplementary support and little /no progress is seen to be made, that student may need to be referred to an out of school agency for further assessment.

Criteria on which this decision is based include:

- Has the student achieved some/any of learning targets set?
- Will the student be able to cope independently in the mainstream classroom?
- The Special Needs Co-ordinator oversees the Referral of students to outside agencies e.g. NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service).
- The Special Needs Co-ordinator meets the parents to discuss the need for referral and to seek consent.
- The necessary referral form is completed in consultation with the appropriate school personnel.
- The external professional visits the school to meet with the student, Parents/Guardians, Principal, Learning Support Teacher/Resource Teacher (as appropriate) and the assessment is conducted.
- This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed.

- Where concern arises regarding the manner or speed of the follow – through post assessment, such concern is pursued by the Principal with the out of school agency concerned.

Success Criteria

Students with Additional Educational Needs are identified, assessed and receive appropriate provision. Once they are profiled, an Student Support Plan can be drawn up and implemented in consultation with Parents, Students and all relevant parties.

Targets will be set for each individual availing of special needs provision. Their progress is measurable and measured regularly. Parents, School Management and other relevant agencies are informed of progress as appropriate. Pupils receive appropriate professional support and that support is available on site where possible.

A decision is made at the end of each instructional term (September – January), (February – end of May) to continue / discontinue the provision of supplementary teaching.

The criteria upon which to continue additional needs is based include:

- Has students achieved all/some of the learning targets.
- Will the students be able to cope independently / semi independently in the classroom learning context?

The decision-making process involves consultation between the Special Educational Needs Team, the students' Parents, other relevant agencies (e.g. NEPS) with consideration also allocated to the overall Special Educational Needs demands in school.

Review Procedure

This policy will be reviewed regularly with prescribed amendments being presented to teaching staff for consultation and to the school Board of Management for subsequent ratification. Other review measures may be initiated when issues of content or implementation of this policy is reported to Additional Educational Needs Team, AEN Co-ordinator or School Management.

School management must ensure appropriate mechanisms and procedure are devised to assist the progress of this review process as quickly as possible.

APPENDICES

Role of Special Education Needs Co-ordinator

- Administer and correct standardised reading, spelling, mathematical and ability tests in February to ascertain reading and mathematical ages of incoming first years.
- Identify pupils with difficulties in reading or writing skills through formal/informal diagnosis.
- Prepare a register of all Special Educational Needs pupils.
- Keep records, profiles, and psychological reports and update records regularly.
- Liaise with parents, subject teacher, and school management.
- Liaise externally with Special Educational Needs Officers, National Educational Psychological Service, the Department of Education and Science and other relevant outside agencies.
- Apply for special arrangements and reasonable concessions in certificate examinations.
- Deploy those that teach pupils with Special Needs who have been granted a reader to assist them in their exams in June.
- Test pupils, using screening and diagnostic standardised testing materials.
- Schedule regular meetings to record, review and update relevant reports and issues.
- Keep informed of current education research, thinking and methodology in the area of Special Educational Needs.
- Keep informed of all current legislation 1998 Education Act, Equality Act, and Persons with Disability Act, Education Welfare Act and to ensure implantation of such Acts in relation to Special Education Needs.
- Prepare Resources.
- Endeavour to ensure all concerned have a proper understanding of the role of the Special Educational Needs Department.

- Strive to keep the Special Educational Needs Department continuously updated with latest equipment, resources and facilities to the highest possible standards.
- To support Principal in delegating duties to Special Needs Assistants.
- Organisation of Irish Exemptions.
- Management of applications for Reasonable Accommodations in SEC examinations
- Coordination of the collection of assessments of incoming students and working with parents and feeder schools to identify students with special needs.
- Liaison with the Principal in the allocation and timetabling of students to classes and the allocation of students to individual Learning Support teachers.
- Submission of NCSE forms.
- Liaison with external service providers i.e. NEPS (including organisation of psychological assessments), SENO, H.S.E.
- Management of Special Needs Assistants.
- Ongoing communication of information concerning SEN pupils to Principal and staff as required.
- Organisation of meetings and case conferences with parents and relevant external agencies as required.

Role of Resource Teacher / Learning Support Teacher

- Provide one to one and /or small group instruction to students from mainstream classes.
- Be available to support pupils and staff both within and outside the classroom environment.
- Operate partnership or “*team teaching*”.
- Prepare resources.
- Formulate and implement programmes to develop and enhance learning, self-confidence, self-esteem, social skills and life skills.
- Prepare students for examinations using the concessions granted to them.
- Test pupils using screening and diagnostic standardised testing materials.
- Liaise with concerned others.
- Use the latest in ICT to develop student’s literacy, numeracy, study skills and social skills.
- Meet regularly with Special Educational Needs team to record, review and update relevant reports and issues.
- Keep informed of current educational research, thinking, methodology and legislation in the area of Special Educational Needs.
- Organise Literacy Week, Numeracy Week and Mental Health Week in the school each year.
- Maintaining regular planning and progress records or equivalent for each individual in receipt of Learning Support / Resource.
- Meeting with parents throughout the year.

Subject Teachers

The academic progress of students throughout the school rests in the first instance with the subject teachers.

Subject teachers are encouraged to:

- Be aware of the School's policy and procedures (as outlined in this document) for dealing with students with individual needs and learning differences.
- Seek advice from the SEN Department regarding students with individual needs and learning differences in their classes and bring any concerns regarding students to the relevant personnel.
- Take account of the needs and learning styles of all their students and employ suitable teaching methods so that all students can access the curriculum at the appropriate level.
- Take responsibility for their own continuous professional development, particularly with regard to common difficulties e.g. Dyslexia & Specific Language difficulties.
- Develop an attitude of ownership to the education of students in their classes with individual needs and learning differences
- Where a student has an SNA the subject teacher should plan how to most effective.

Role of Parents

- To support the policy and to co-operate fully with the school in its implantations.
- To bring to the attention of the school authorities any concern they may have in relation to the schools provision for the Special Educational Needs of students.
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implantation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Role of Students

- To co-operate fully with the school in the implementation of the policy.
- To offer suggestions for improving the service to students with special needs.

Role of Special Needs Assistant

The Special Needs Assistant may be assigned to a particular students or group of students. The Special Needs Assistant is a support to the student /group by promoting independence, inspiring confidence and trust, fostering peer group acceptance, enabling the students, encouraging and rewarding the student, knowing about and understanding the student needs and strengths

- The main duties of the Special Needs Assistant are to assist students with disabilities in an educational context.
- The S.N.A. may have to deal with the personal care and toileting of the student.
- The duties of the S.N.A are assigned by the Principal supported by the Special Needs Co-ordinator. These duties depend on the needs of each particular individual /group with special needs.

Duties may include the following:

- Assisting student to board and alight from school buses. Travel as escort to student may be required.
- Special assistance as necessary – help with typing, writing, computers etc.
- Assistance with general hygiene, toileting and personal care, mindful of the health and safety needs of the student...
- Assisting on out of school visit's walks, examinations and similar activities.
- Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom for whatever reason.
- General assistance to the subject teacher, under direction of the subject teacher involved and the Principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature, e.g. photocopying.
- Other duties may be determined by the needs of the individual /group and the school from time to time.
- Assisting in school based events such as "Open Days", "Information Nights", "Entrance Exam" etc. This would entail preparation of assembly hall and / or classrooms.

The duties of the Special Needs Assistant do not include the following:

- Acting as a substitute teacher.
- Acting as a temporary teacher.
- Being left in sole charge of a class.
- The subject teacher retains responsibility for the educational needs of the students and provides direction for the Special Needs assistant. The subject teachers should inform the Special Needs Assistant of class plans, methods of working and expectations for students.
- The Special Needs Assistant should have sufficient background information on the individual in order to have a clearer understanding of the student needs, abilities and the student himself/herself.
- Parents and students should be informed of the role and duties of the Special Needs Assistants.
- The hours of duty will be 32 hours per week.
- Normal work break entitlements will apply.
- Special Needs Assistants will be required to be available during the month of June to assist with examinations.
- Special Needs Assistants will also be required to spend a number of days between school terms to engage in duties relating to the general requirements of the school.
- Annual leave will be taken during school holiday periods.
- Special Needs Assistants will be required to be available during academic holiday periods subject to the minimum holiday provision applicable to other non-academic employees in the school (20 days)
- Due discretion is expected on matters of a confidential nature.
- Contract will be fixed term for a school year.

Reasonable Accommodations

The AEN Department will liaise with the State Examinations Commission to secure and facilitate reasonable accommodations for eligible students with individual needs and learning differences during State Examinations.

Applications for Junior Certificate students take place in January of the school year when the examination takes place. Applications for Leaving Certificate students take place in December of the school year. Parental permission is always sought at this stage. Students with individual needs and learning differences sit house exams in accordance with St. Brendan's College school procedures. In as much as can be achieved with limited resources, students who have been awarded special arrangements for State Exams will have the benefit of the same in the school exams.

Equipment

The SEN Department will liaise with the Department of Education & Skills and the NCSE to secure and facilitate personal equipment (such as laptop computers, voice recognition software) for eligible students with individual needs and learning differences.

Data Management and Privacy Individual files will be kept on each student in the care of the SEN Department. Information in the files may include psychological reports, results from entrance assessments, correspondence between the school, parents and other relevant agencies, and applications for support and concessions. Files are maintained by the SENCO and access is afforded to the Principal, the Deputy Principal, members of the Special Needs Department, Year Heads and the Guidance Counsellor.

Beyond these individuals, information regarding special needs is communicated to teachers on a need to know basis. In accordance with section 14. (1.d) of the EPSEN Act 2004, the School 'shall ensure that all relevant teachers and other relevant employees of the schools are aware of the special educational needs of students'. Information is provided to teachers' staff meetings throughout the year.

Minutes of weekly SEN Department meetings, SNA meetings, etc. (which may identify students) shall be kept securely under the responsibility of the SENCO. Each teacher in the SEN Department will keep their own attendance and progress records, which shall be filed securely. For the purposes of organization, all general correspondence relating to the SEN Department shall be directed to the SENCO.

Homework Procedures

Where SEN homework is given, the same procedures apply as per any other homework. Special emphasis is placed on positive feedback. SEN work is also recorded in the student's journal, and the journal may be used frequently to facilitate communication with parents.

Links with Outside Agencies

- National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) for Mayo
- Special Education Support Service (SESS)
- Visiting Teacher for the Deaf
- Psychologist – Teresa Judge- National Education Psychological Service (NEPS)
- State Examinations Commission (SEC)
- National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)
- HSE Social Work Department Castlebar Co. Mayo
- HSE services – Donal Hoban
- SENO – John Culhane
- Third Level Student Support Services
- Association for Higher Education Access and Disability
- Dyslexia Association of Ireland
- The Dyspraxia Association
- Enable Ireland
- Aspire (Aspergers support)

Links in the School

- Guidance Counsellor – Barbara Padden
- HSCL –Mary Gaughan
- School Completion Project Worker- Roisin Heavey
- SEN – Ms Donohoe & Ms Sammon (PGSEN)
- AEN Co-ordinator – Seamus O' Malley
- JCSP Co-ordinator
- Principal and Vice Principal
- Year Heads and Tutors

Transition for New First Years

- A day of sampling what takes place in subjects in the school (Experience Day).
- Enrolment evening with parents.
- Summer Camp in July through School Completion Programme.
- Briefing Day in August for all teachers to inform them of all students' needs.

- Transition Day as soon as they enter our school in August.
- Girls Active throughout the year where SCP worker and SEN co-ordinator run.

Recent CPD for SEN Co-ordinator

- Instructional Leadership Training completed with Barry Bennett in Carlow.
- New Junior Certificate Training for English completed.
- Laura Coleman staff talk attended as part of 'Mind Your Mind Week'.
- Ongoing refresher courses with St. Angela's College Sligo.
- Anti – Bullying training attended as part of Iorras le Cheile initiative.
- Working on a pilot scheme with parents in Erris to set youth centre for students with disabilities based on the WALK PEER Programme

Future/ Year 2025/26

- Level 1 & 2 training for the Leaving Certificate

The School Completion Programme (SCP) within St. Brendan's

In St. Brendan's college we have a local project Coordinator who runs the SCP, Roisin Heavey.

The School Completion Programme (SCP) is a Department of Education & Science initiative that aims to have a positive impact on levels of pupil retention in primary and second level schools and on the number of pupils who successfully complete the Senior Cycle, or equivalent.

SCP entails targeting individual young people of school-going age, both in and out of school, and arranging supports to address inequalities in education access, participation and outcomes. It is based on the project model with an integrated approach involving primary and post primary schools, parents and relevant statutory, voluntary and community agencies.

Projects are required to engage in a consultative and planning process with schools' staff, with parents and with local representatives of relevant statutory, voluntary and community agencies in the development of the annual retention plans. What makes the School Completion Programme unique is its 'bottom up' approach, which allows the local management committees to put together plans and supports that target the needs of local young people at risk of early school leaving.

Home School Liaison Officer (HSCL)

In February 2014 under the DEIS Scheme, St. Brendan's College was granted a full-time HSCL Coordinator, Mrs. Mary Gaughan.

The underlying policy of the scheme is one that seeks to promote partnership between parents and teachers. The purpose of this partnership is to enhance pupil's learning opportunities and to promote their retention in the educational system. In addition, the HSCL Scheme places great emphasis on collaboration with the local community. The Local Committee of the HSCL Scheme is central to this process of involvement. Both parents and pupils are represented at Local Committee meetings together with representatives from the various agencies in Erris.

The five goals of the H.S.C.L. Scheme focus on:

- Supporting marginalised pupils
- Promoting co-operation between home, school and community
- Empowering parents
- Retaining young people in the education system
- Disseminating best practice.

Home Visitation is at the heart of the HSCL Scheme's focus on partnership. It promotes co-operation between the school and the home. It affirms the parents' role as the primary educators. In reaching out to families the HSCL coordinator represents the human face of the school and embodies a real expression of interest in the lives of the children entrusted to St. Brendan's College.

The role of the coordinator is:

- Instil confidence
- Provide support and reassurance
- Break down negative attitudes and fears
- Encourage active parenting
- Help parents to develop their own skills and potential through involvement in school-related activities.

As part of HSCL, there is a Parents Room in the school which provides an easy, warm and welcoming forum for parents in realising their role as the primary educators of their children. Tea and Coffee making facilities are available. The parents meet the HSCL coordinator and other members of the school community, who provide a valuable source of friendship, support, encouragement, and reassurance. The HSCL Coordinator links with the Year Heads in the school regarding the welfare of students and also with the Rural Coordinators from the feeder schools in the area regarding incoming students.

The Parents Room is also available to students who may wish to discuss struggles or challenges they may be experiencing in a confidential setting.

A Care Team is also in place in the school which meets on a weekly basis. Its role is to support students who have needs which may be educational, emotional, psychological, medical or developmental in character. The idea of a team approach within the school is intended to bring all the available resources of the school together to address, in a strategic and co-ordinated manner, the complex needs of students. Interventions can also involve agencies and support personnel from outside.

Junior Certificate School Programme

The JCSP programme provides schools with a framework to ensure students enjoy positive experiences of the Junior Certificate through a creative, achievable, broad-based curriculum and go on to achieve success in the Junior Certificate examination. The Junior Certificate School Programme is a national programme sponsored by the Department of Education and Science and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. It originated in the early school leavers' programmes initiated by the Curriculum Development Unit and currently the programme is operating in over 240 schools throughout the country.

The JCSP aims to provide a curriculum framework that assists schools and teachers in making the Junior Certificate more accessible to those young people who may leave school without formal qualifications. It attempts to help young people experience success and develop a positive self-image by providing a curriculum and assessment framework suitable to their needs. On completion of the programme students receive a profile which is an official record of their achievements from the Department of Education and Science. The aim of the Junior Certificate School Programme is to provide a fresh approach to the Junior Certificate Programme for potential early school leavers who are struggling to cope with secondary school. It is an intervention for these students based on the concept that all young people are capable of achieving real success in school. There are no core subjects as such. However, all students must be entered in the Junior Certificate Exam in English and Maths and they must follow a suitable course in Irish. The JCSP Programme is aimed at 12–16 year olds who are potential early school leavers. The Junior Certificate School Programme is not an alternative to the Junior Certificate. It is a framework that is designed to help schools and teachers develop an imaginative approach to the Junior Certificate course. All the students in the Programme must be entered for the Junior Certificate examination.

The JCSP is a way of working within the Junior Cert. It is designed especially to help young people who have had a difficult experience of school and may be potential early leavers. Through a system of profiling a student's work in Junior Cycle classes, students are provided with opportunities to engage with the curriculum and to achieve success at school. They get an official certificate of their achievements, validated by the Department of Education and Science, in addition to their Junior Certificate Examination

Certificate. The whole point of participating in the Junior Certificate School Programme is to stay at school, experience success in school and become more confident about sitting the Junior Certificate Exam.

Students cannot fail JCSP. The Programme is about success. Achievable statements are carefully chosen. Students get an opportunity to complete a series of statements and build their own success profile – a profile listing all the things they can do. It is up to the teacher and the school to decide what way they want to organise the students in their classes. Students are told that they are doing the Junior Certificate Course. Instead of waiting to do an exam to get a certificate after three years, they can begin to work towards their exams immediately. Teachers will take a chunk of their subject, called a statement, which ‘states’ that they can do something. This statement will be put on their certificates soon as they have achieved the required number of learning targets.

Students get an opportunity to become more involved in their own learning, discussing statements and meeting targets. Through engagement with this learning process, students begin to succeed and go on to build on this success. Throughout their time on the Programme the JCSP team seeks out opportunities to reward and praise students and to give them useful feedback on their performance. In addition, the JCSP team tries to make positive contact with the students’ families. When the students sit their Junior Certificate exam they also get a certificate from the Department of Education and Science and a profile listing all they have achieved while on the Programme. Parental involvement is encouraged and welcomed in JCSP. Schools increase the frequency of contact with parents with emphasis on passing on ‘good news’. Many schools hold parent days to exhibit work done, award certificates of achievement and generally celebrate with parents their children’s successes. Parents are invited to become actively involved in their children’s education by working with the school in encouraging good attendance, punctuality and homework and by praising progress made.

DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

In the DEIS action plan for educational inclusion, experience has been drawn from students, parents and family members, teachers and other educational professionals active in the area. We all know that educational disadvantage is complex and on that basis the DEIS initiative has been designed accordingly. Despite the complexity of the challenges of delivering equality of opportunity in our schools the objectives of the DEIS initiative are clear.

We want all our young people to gain the maximum personal benefit from the education experience within our school. We want the needs of the learner and a culture of high expectations to be at the centre of all our actions. These actions must include a concentration on literacy and numeracy from an early stage; strong links between the home, school and community: strong links between schools working in a co-operative manner: and added value from links between education and other services. The value of DEIS to our school and our students is enormous in terms of additional investment in terms of infrastructure, resources, special initiatives and staffing. Our action plan in delivering educational excellence for our students is about building on the success stories we have had in educational provision, in tackling educational disadvantage. The DEIS initiative in our school enables us to do what is right for our students and is grounded in the belief that:

- Every young person deserves an equal chance to access, participate in and benefit from education in our school.
- Each person should have the opportunity to reach her/his full educational potential for personal, social and economic reasons.
- Education is a critical factor in promoting social inclusion and economic development.

Homework Club

The homework club is an after school club where free tutoring is offered to students who are struggling with their school work. The tutors not only assist the students with their homework in subjects such as Math, Science, English and other subjects, but they also provide them with helpful tips and techniques to help them succeed in their classes.

Students attending St. Brendan's College will have a variety of individual needs. These may include (but are not restricted to):

- Physical Disability/Illness eg. Hearing impairment, wheelchair user, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, syndromes etc.
- Emotional/Behavioural Problems Typically ADHD, but other disorders can apply. These are NOT “bold” children, and with the right support and/or medication can thrive in a “mainstream” school
- Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Autism is a condition that involves with difficulties with
 1. Social Interaction
 2. Language and Communication
 3. Behavioural Patterns. The idea of a “spectrum” is that most people exhibit some autistic traits – just having one or two doesn’t mean a child is autistic. Asperger’s Syndrome – children with this form of autism are often very high-functioning and can cope very well in a mainstream setting.
- Specific Learning Difference Dyslexia – difficulty reading Hyperlexia – difficulty with comprehension Dyscalculia – difficulty with numbers Dysgraphia – difficulty with writing Dyspraxia – difficulty with motor skills
- General Learning Disability - while children with Mild, Moderate or Profound GLD will probably require special schooling, others with Borderline GLD (an IQ of 70-79) can cope very well in a mainstream setting.
- Speech and language difficulties.

Gifted students can also find secondary education extremely very stressful or distressing and may struggle to fit in. St. Brendan's College will also endeavour to address the needs of particularly able students, using tactics such as differentiated teaching styles and individual support where deemed necessary.

The Education Act 1998

This was the first law enacted in Ireland to deal with education. One of the objectives of the Act is to give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children, including children who have a disability or who have other special educational needs. Schools are required to ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with a disability or other special educational needs are identified and provided for. The Education Act requires that schools use their available resources to ensure that the educational needs of all pupils, including those with disabilities and special educational needs are identified and provided for. It also gives the Minister for Education and Skills the function: 'to ensure that there is made available to each person resident in the State, including a person with a disability or who has other special educational needs, support services and a level of quality of education appropriate to meeting the needs and abilities of that person (Section 7 (1) (a)). The Broader Legislative Framework National Council for Special Education Children with Special Educational Needs

The Disability Act 2005

The Disability Act is designed to promote the participation of people with disabilities in society by supporting the provision of disability specific services and improving access to mainstream public services. The Act establishes a right to an independent assessment of individual needs and a related service statement. On 1st June 2007, Part 2 of the Disability Act became law for children under the age of five years, giving them a right to an independent assessment of need. Assessment Officers (HSE) and SENOs (NCSE) work together at a local level in relation to these assessments of need which take place under Section 8(3) of the Disability Act for children under the age of five years. The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)

The Data Protection Acts

This act was designed to protect the rights of individuals with regard to personal data that is held about them by public agencies either on computer files or in paper files. Public agencies are required to act in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Acts and in accordance with any other guidance in relation to the acts provided by the Data Protection Commissioner about the management of information on individual pupils. Essentially data protection legislation is designed to ensure that any information held on record about you or your child by a public body:

- is held only with your consent
- is accurate, up to date and treated confidentially
- is used only for the purposes for which you gave consent.

The Data Protection Commissioner has produced a range of user friendly guides to this legislation which are available at www.dataprotection.ie.

Freedom of Information Act (1998)

The Freedom of Information Act (FOI Act) came into effect on 21 April, 1998 and was amended on 11 April 2003. Under this Act you have a right to access records held by Government departments and certain public bodies. The National Council for Special Education is one of the bodies covered by the FOI Act. The Government department or body must give you an explanation if you are not given a copy of the records you have requested. Further information about the Freedom of Information Act is available at www.foi.gov.ie

EPSEN ACT 2014

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act was passed into law in July 2004. Special educational needs are defined in this act 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.

The EPSEN Act recognises that special educational needs may arise from four different areas of disability:

- physical
- sensory
- mental health
- Learning disability or from any other condition that results in the child learning differently from a child without that condition. It is also important to understand that a child can have a disability but not have any special educational needs arising from that disability which require additional supports in school.

Recommendations from WSE 2005 – SEN Department

1. We are now focused on being part of the pilate Inclusion Mapping Programme
2. The SEN and Inclusion Department now consists of an AP1, Ap2, Deputy Principal and SEN Teachers.
3. Staff are trained on an on-going basis.
4. The SEN and Inclusion Co-ordinator is also on the core team in the school.