

Special Education Needs Policy



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Vision Statement

The college's ambition is to achieve an excellent standard in Gaelic Education, language awareness, teaching quality, extra-curricular and cultural events. In addition, the college's vision is that Coláiste Cois Life's students will be prepared to enthusiastically accept the challenges they will face in life in the future.

Mission Statement

Coláiste Cois Life is a fully Irish - language designated Community College with a Catholic Ethos that provides a holistic education for all students in a safe and secure environment where all students can achieve all their talents. A learning environment is created where the care of the students is attended to in an atmosphere of trust, positivity, helpfulness, spirituality, and friendliness. In this atmosphere it will be expected that all students will succeed so that they will be able to fulfill their ambitions and that all members of the college community will feel that they are worthy, important and that they are respected.

We at Coláiste Cois Life set out to run our school as a learning centre where the worthy traditions of Ireland will be around us , our faith, our language, our music, and all aspects of Irish culture. In the school, the students will get to know the valuable aspects of life through good example, through advice and through friendship with the school staff. We try to develop the whole personality of the student, to understand the right, the existence, the freedom, the self-discipline and compassion with other people. We understand the importance that parents / guardians will be involved in the promotion of these values at school, at home and in life. This policy was put together in part with the management, teaching staff, parents and students of the school.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all SEN students, including students with advanced abilities, who are attending Coláiste Cois Life. It is also intended to serve the entire school community - including the Board of Management, the Principal, the teaching staff and parents/ guardians.

This policy must be read in the context of the other policies in Coláiste Cois Life.

Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- Give a definition of what special needs are according to the acts relating to special needs.
- Clarifying the role of all members of the school team in special needs courses.
- Develop and promote Comprehensive Education in the school.
- Fostering students' self-confidence and ensuring the participation of all students.
- To foster a friendly relationship in the school community in order to develop cooperation on behalf of all students, including those with special needs.
- To provide a safe and caring environment in which all students can fulfill their full potential.

- Ensuring that all students receive equal access to the curriculum / specification to which they are entitled in accordance with the Special Educational Needs Act (2004) and the Education (Arrangement for Children with Special Educational Needs) Act, 2022.
- Fostering teachers' knowledge and skills and promoting training.
- Adapting curriculum and promoting effective strategies for teaching students with special educational needs at second level.

The Legislative Framework

Coláiste Cois Life aims to provide education for all its students, taking into account the following legislation regarding students with RSO:

- Education Act (1998)
- Education (Welfare) Act (2000)
- Equal Status Act (2000)
- The Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill (2003)
- Equality Act (2004)
- The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998, 2003, 2016 and 2018)
- The Freedom of Information Acts (1997, 2003 and 2014)
- EPRSO Act (Education for People with Special Educational Needs) (2004)
- Children First Act (2015)
- The Education (School Admissions) Act (2018)

Also used to write this policy: Circulars of the Department of Education and Skills (DES), in particular Special Education Circular 0014/2017, Circular 0020/2022 and Circular 0001/2023:

- Guidelines published by NEPS
- The 2006 Individual Education Plan Process Guidelines
- Riachtanais Speisialta Oideachais i scoileanna ina bhfuil an Ghaeilge mar mheán. Taighde uile-oileánda ar riachtanais tacaíochta agus traenála na hearnála (COGG)
- The Guidelines on the Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools (NEPS)
- The Guidelines published by the Special Educational Needs Support Service (SESS)
- Support Guidelines for Students with Special Educational Needs in mainstream post-primary schools, published by the Department of Education and Skills.

Definition of Special Educational Needs

"Special educational needs" is defined in the EPRSO Act, Education for People with Special Educational Needs, (2004) as "a limitation in ability of the person to participate in or benefit from education due to a physical disability, sensory disorder, mental health or learning difficulty or because of any other problem which means that person learns in a different way to someone without that difficulty".

A Three Stage Process to support students with Additional Educational Needs

Following the NEPS Continuum of Support Framework, a 3-step process is recommended for students to identify and support additional educational needs. SEN involves a continuum. A wide range of different abilities is involved - mild to more serious disability, temporary to long-term disability. Different students need different levels of support depending on their

specific needs. This framework helps to ensure that the additional help is brought in gradually, i.e the intervention is done incrementally. Intervention begins at class level and thereafter, as needed, stronger support is provided to the individual student. A keen eye is kept on progress and the level of support is based on that.

The role of the Board of Management

- Ensuring that the Continuum of Support is implemented in Coláiste Cois Life.
- Ensuring that all pupils who require learning support or who have special educational needs are identified and assessed using the continuum of support.
- Review the policy.
- That the mission and ethos of Coláiste Cois Life is reflected in the policy.
- That the policy complies with statutory requirements.
- Ensuring that the school has a policy regarding special educational needs, that the enforcement of that policy will be monitored and that it will be assessed continuously.
- Ensuring that pupils with special educational needs are offered a broad, balanced and varied curriculum and that they are catered for in an inclusive manner.
- Ensuring that the necessary resources are sought on behalf of pupils with special educational needs.
- Promote the development of positive partnerships with parents and other relevant agencies/personnel and ensure that parents are informed of their child's special educational needs and how those needs are being met.
- Parents / guardians are consulted in relation to all significant decisions made in relation to their child's education, and that they are invited to participate in those decisions.

Role of Principal/ Deputy Principal

The Principal is responsible for all aspects of the daily management of policy and provision for students with special educational needs on behalf of the Coláiste Cois Life management board. The Principal could delegate certain functions to appropriate teachers (as specified in Section 18 of the Education for People with Special Educational Needs Act 2004)

- Ensuring that the continuum of Support is implemented in Coláiste Cois Life.
- Implement the policy, support students and teachers to create a positive atmosphere.
- Liaise with the Department of Education and Skills regarding requirements and provision, in consultation with other relevant personnel. This also includes requests for qualifications and reasonable exemptions in relation to state examinations as well as assessments.
- Ensuring the most efficient use of resources, including the allocation of resource hours and funds.
- To promote the approach of the whole school in relation to special educational needs, to inform all members of staff of their duties in that area and to facilitate the development of appropriate staff in that area.
- Encourage the development of positive partnerships with Parents/ Guardians of pupils with SEN.

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENO)

The SEN teachers will assess the students under their care. They will mediate with other team members as appropriate. They will gather information from the Education Passes, tests and other assessments. They will develop, implement and monitor Level 2 or 3 Support Plans.

- The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENO) will coordinate meetings with teachers who are providing support.
- The SENO will represent the SEN Team and will speak on their behalf at meetings of the Pastoral Care Committee. He/she will work in collaboration with them, to meet the care needs of all the school's students, including students with SEN. He/she will help those students who have social/emotional difficulties.
- The SENO and the career guidance teacher will conduct the assessments for RACE, DARE, HEAR.
- He/she will develop and implement a school-wide SEN policy under the guidance of the Principal.
- The SENO keeps all the information related to support for the student together: information that has been collected, plans, interventions, consultations and reviews in the Student's Support File.
- He/she will guide the Subject Teachers in providing support to students with SEN.
- He/she will consult with the parents of SEN students regarding their particular learning needs.
- He/she will consult with external agencies to make arrangements regarding educational assessments and the provision of support for students with SEN.
- He/she will facilitate the transition from primary schools and other post-primary schools for students with SEN together with the Year Head in collaboration with the Principal
- He/she will lead the 3-step process – identifying the need, intervening, monitoring and keeping a record of the progress in the student's file with the learning support teacher on Teams.
- In collaboration with the Principal and the special educational needs organizer (SENO), the SENO will allocate the resources, such as additional teaching hours and information and communication technology (ICT) for SEN students.
- Use of appropriate Technology (ICT) for the SEN students who are entitled to a grant from the Department of Education & Skills for Assistive Technology.
- He/she will arrange for students with SEN to receive exemption from specific subjects as necessary.
- In collaboration with the Secretary of Examinations and the Secondary Principal, the SENO will organize that students with SEN will receive special assistance in Reasonable Compromise or in the School exams.

Other Professional People

- Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists etc. be included indirectly as well, offering consultation or advice through the SEN Team.

- The Special Educational Needs Coordinator will have to ensure that a student support file is in place for each student - information collected, plans, consultation interventions and review.

The Career Guidance Teacher

The Careers Teacher is part of the SEN team and should:

- Help other members of the SEN Team to promote the inclusivity of SEN students in the school.
- To provide guidance and support on an individual basis for students with SEN and to involve parents as required.
- Helping students at different times of their school life choosing the right subjects and making career decisions. It is important that the Career Guidance Teacher helps the SEN student to be realistic about their career goals.
- Work in collaboration with the SEN Team in the assessment process.
- Help SEN students develop personally and socially.
- Help with career planning ie interview skills, work experience etc.

The role of the Subject Teacher

- Implementing the Continuum of Support in Coláiste Cois Life.
- Notes are available on VSWare and on Teams about student needs. It is the subject teacher's duty to read these and implement the appropriate arrangements for their class.
- The subject teacher will make the appropriate changes in the teaching strategies and the learning objectives so that the students make the progress they can achieve.
- Differentiation should be applied in the class to address the needs of students in Coláiste Cois Life.
- The Subject Teacher seeks advice from the SEN Team.
- He/she implements the Level 1 Support Plan when necessary.
- He/she keeps the Year Head informed about the Classroom Support Plan as well as liaising and communicating with the learning support teacher.
- Every Subject Teacher should implement a teaching approach and methodology that meaningfully includes students with SEN. These include:
 - Cooperative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms.
 - Collaborative problem-solving activities.
 - Differentiation.
 - Interventions to promote social competence and emotional competence.
 - Information & Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching, learning and facilitation .

Among the Differentiating Methods that are being implemented by teachers at Coláiste Cois Life are:

- Changing the level, structure, teaching method and pace of the lessons to meet specific needs.
- Lessons to suit the interests of the students.

- Matching tasks and process to the ability and needs of the students.
- Using resources and putting them to use, including the use of ICT.
- Setting learning goals, which are quite challenging and making assessments accordingly.

Assessment

Evaluation should always have a practical aim or goal. In Coláiste Cois Life, assessment is used for the following purposes:

- To obtain information that will assist planning, learning and appropriate teaching at an appropriate level.
- To evaluate students' progress.
- To set a baseline in relation to the student's achievement in literacy and numeracy.
- To identify students who need learning support.
- To provide information for consultations with external agencies ie NEPS.
- Within a classroom setting to ensure a true diversity of abilities.

Assessment Methods

A. Formative Assessment

Standardized tests give the SEN Team a general idea of the student's ability. It gives them the opportunity to understand the student's ability level compared to other students of the same age or class. Every student who registers at the school takes the formal assessment.

B. Informal Assessment

Informal methods of assessment:

- Class tests
- Informal observation of the teacher
- Assessment of written work
- An informal analysis of the students' language and social development

C. Information Collection

- The Year Head contacts the primary schools with regard to all the students who will be starting the First Year in relation to any needs they may have.
- The primary schools send the results of the standardized tests available ie Drumcondra Tests, Reading, Spelling and Maths.
- The primary schools provide reports on each student to the secondary school.
- The Year Head attends transition meetings with the primary school principal, the class teacher, the parent of the starting student and in some cases, the school's NEPS psychologist.
- On the enrolment application form, parents are asked to inform the school of any special educational needs that may be involved. This has nothing to do with the child's enrollment rights but is used to identify any need that may be involved as soon as practicable.

- The Year Head contacts parents and the appropriate external agencies if any special educational needs are identified.

The Parent / Guardian

- The school recognizes the role of Parents/Guardians in the development and implementation of the Policy.
- Coláiste Cois Life welcomes any Parent/Guardian who is concerned about their son/daughter.
- We will expect the Parents/Guardians to support the school in implementing the Continuum of Support.
- To inform the school of any difficulty students might have along with the results of the Cognitive Ability test, identifying relevant information or reports that may required to allow for additional support at Post-Primary level.
- That the student's file for continuity of support is in place and that the support of the Parent/Guardian will be very important in this process.
- This file will be used as a plan template for any student with learning needs.
- The co-operation of Parents/Guardians will always be encouraged at Coláiste Cois Life.
- Family is the main educator and therefore, a Parent/Guardian takes on a very important role in identifying, supporting and achieving the goals of their son/daughter.
- A Parent/Guardian is asked to forward any information that will help meet the learning needs of their son/daughter when filling out the entry form to register at Coláiste Cois Life.

The Role of the Student

- The school staff will expect all students to comply with the Special Education Needs Policy.
- Coláiste Cois Life believes that the best learning outcomes are achieved when students take ownership and responsibility for their own learning.
- It will be expected that they will be interested in the work of the school and express their opinions in a positive and respectful way.
- Collaborate with the subject teacher in implementing the Continuity of Support Student File.
- The subject teacher gives students the opportunity to participate in skills explorations and conversations about their disability. Students in the Senior Cycle are particularly encouraged to take a proactive and independent approach to their academic work.

Pupils Receiving Additional Support

- Have a positive attitude towards participation in their learning.
- Be aware of their learning goals and be active in setting those goals.
- To be involved in the selection of material relevant to the achievement of these goals.
- To participate fully in all assessments.
- Take "Ownership" of the skills and strategies taught as part of the extra support they receive and learn to apply these in their own learning.

Transition from Primary School

- The Year Head contacts the Primary Schools before the student enters Coláiste Cois Life.
- The school sees this contact as an important step in the accurate identification of those students with special educational needs and in the provision of care for them on an ongoing basis. Visits are arranged for students with special educational needs where possible before they transition to Coláiste Cois Life.
- The information received from the Primary Schools and the parents, together with the results of the Cognitive Ability tests, helps the school to identify those pupils who may need additional support at Post-Primary level.

Reasonable Accommodations

Students will apply in compliance with the instructions of the State Examinations Commission.

SEN Team

The SEN Team consists of the school's Principal, the Secondary Principal, the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENO), the Learning Support Teachers, the Resource Teachers and the Special Needs Assistants. The role of the Career Guidance Counselor is to collaborate with the SEN Team. The SENO is responsible under the guidance of the Principal, for managing the provision of support for students with SEN. He/she is responsible for organizing and monitoring the provision of that support.

Staff Meetings

There will be a staff meeting at the beginning of each year to keep the staff informed about all the students with SEN who will be starting at the school and to give suggestions about how the students with SEN can be more involved in the classes.

Part 2: The role of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

Special needs assistants are provided to secondary schools to assist designated students with special educational needs. Special Needs Assistants are recruited to help a school provide the appropriate non-teaching services for students who have assessed special needs.

The Principal must support and give clear instructions to special needs assistants in relation to the duties they have to perform.

Regular meetings between the Principal/Secondary Principal and the Special Needs Assistants are good opportunities to discuss issues and deal with concerns.

They should work closely with the teachers with a desire to help students with special educational needs, for example, with their personal care, mobility support, or supervision of practical or recreational activities.

The special needs assistants usually do their work on the school premises. However, it could happen that students with special educational needs were sent to attend another centre outside the school and that a special needs assistant was sent to assist them in this centre and accompany them when traveling.

Cois Life will expect the special needs assistants to keep everything related to school business and their own work in the school completely confidential.

The Special Needs Assistant provides care assistance to designated students with special educational needs. They make a valuable contribution to the school's ability to provide a comprehensive education for these students.

The Special Needs assistant plays an important role in relation to the student's health and safety and in relation to their social, emotional and educational development. It is important that the Special Needs Assistant supports the student's participation in school life without developing a culture of dependency.

The duties of Special Needs assistants include non-teaching tasks such as:

- Helping students on school trips.
- Giving special assistance, as needed, to students with particular difficulties eg helping students with special needs with typing, writing or using other equipment.
- Assist with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene, and be attentive to the student's health and safety needs.
- Assist with examinations (if appropriate).
- Assisting the teachers with the supervision of students during assembly, recreation and when they are changing from one classroom to another.
- Provide general non-teaching assistance to the subject teacher, under the direction of the Principal/Secondary Principal. Special Needs Assistants may not act as substitute or temporary teachers.
- Participate in school development planning, where appropriate, and collaborate with any such change in policies and practices that arise from the school development process.
- Other appropriate duties that will be determined in light of the needs of the students and the school.
- Help during visits outside the school, walks, exams and other such events.
- Prepare and keep workspaces and classrooms tidy.
- Plan activities.
- Other duties appropriate to the position, as directed by the Principal, during the absence of students with special needs, or when urgent business arises.
- Supporting the student as well as promoting independence.
- Cooperate with the teacher.
- Support the organization of folders.
- Helping students stay focused, follow classroom conventions, and interact appropriately.
- Helping students increase their self-confidence and develop their independence.
- The importance of promoting personal hygiene.
- Spotting early signs of bullying.
- Will help the student to stay focused and direct them to their work so that the student has a better opportunity to learn. This could be done by quietly explaining points and repeating the teacher's instructions. The SNA helps the student take notes while the teacher is talking.

- Encourage good attendance and punctuality.
- Some students find it easier to talk to a Special Needs Assistant and the Assistant may be the first to be informed about bullying. All such information must be taken seriously and reported to the Principal immediately.

Staff Meetings for the SNA

Special Needs Assistants may be required to attend staff meetings when matters relating to their own work are being discussed.

SNA Timetables and working Hours

- The Principal will give the Special Needs Assistants a timetable at the beginning of the year.
- The guidance of the Department of Education and Skills regarding working hours will be adhered to and followed.
- The Special Needs Assistants should be involved in the ongoing process of the CPD and attend in-service courses on a regular basis.
- While the teaching staff are on in-service courses, the Special Needs Assistants will be working as usual. They will have been given duties to assist in organizing the classrooms of the absent teachers, that is, organizing classroom displays, organizing the classroom libraries, organizing teaching equipment, admin work etc.

The role of the Subject Teacher and the SNA in a classroom

- It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that the Special Needs Assistant is clear about where assistance is needed. Planning things together is essential.
- The teacher is also obliged to support the role of the SNA.
- Show that the role of the SNA in Coláiste Cois Life is valued.
- The Special Needs Assistants for students with physical disabilities will support those students inside and outside the classroom as they need help. It could be to keep an eye on the student in the yard or to help them get in and out of the school.

Part 3: Teaching Individual Students

These procedures will apply when a teacher is in class teaching an individual student:

- The classroom door will be left open during class.
- There will be a bench between the teacher and the student during the class.
- If there is noise in the school environment the door can be closed but make sure there is a glass panel in the door.
- Depending on the student's learning needs and promoting inclusion in the classroom, it may sometimes happen that a teacher will direct and help the learning of the student(s) in their year group.

Student Support File (Individual Education Plan)

The school can keep a record of the student's course through the Continuum of Support with the Student Support File. The student's course can be followed from the beginning of the support process and thereafter, if required, to the School Support level (for some students) and to the School Support Plus level (for a small number of students).

- The Student Support File allows the school to record progress and needs over time.
- The Student Support File ensures that there is continuity of support for the student, including the transition from primary school to post-primary school.
- The Student Support File can encourage parental involvement and collaboration in the student's learning.
- The Student Support File helps schools to provide an appropriate level of support for students, in line with their level of needs.
- The Student Support File, under the direction of the SENO, holds together all the information regarding support for the student: information collected, plans, interventions, consultations and reviews (Individual Education Plan).

Support Level 1: Support for All

If a student has difficulties (learning difficulties, behavioral difficulties, organizational difficulties, motivational difficulties etc.), the class teacher will support that student as well as his/her abilities through differentiation etc. If this does not work, the teacher will then speak to the Year Head. The Year Head will then assess the situation and liaise with the parents/guardians or arrange for liaising with the parents/guardians. The Year Head will then return to the class teacher(s) with any further feedback. In addition, the SENO will produce the Level 1 Support Plan for that student. If the student still has difficulties after a certain period of time (which has been discussed and agreed with the Year Head) the Year Head will refer the case to the Pastoral Care Committee for consideration for level 2 support.

Level 2: Support for Some Students

The Pastoral Care Committee will discuss any case brought before them and refer the case to one of the following:

- The Career Guidance Teacher
- The Special Educational Needs Coordinator
- The Principal

Whoever of the above is given the case will further assess the case and gather more information about the student. They will then keep a written record of the measures implemented and will produce a level 2 support plan for that student. All of the student's teachers and support staff will implement that plan. The SENO will monitor this plan.

Level 3: Support for a Small Number of Students

After an agreed period of time with the nominated member of the Pastoral Care Team, if the student is still having difficulties, the contact can refer the case to the Pastoral Care Team to begin Level 3 Support. At this point for The Pastoral Care Team could decide to seek advice from an external expert (ie Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Psychologist, CAHMS, NEPS etc.). This could also involve a more comprehensive assessment, with the permission of the parents / guardians. Under the guidance of an expert, and again with the permission of the parents, the nominated contact will draw up a level 3 support plan, he/she will keep a written record in the Student Support File of the measures that are decided and the measures taken will be monitored in force.

Appendices