

Special Educational Needs Policy

Boherbue Comprehensive School

1.0 Definition of Special Educational Needs:

Special educational needs is defined 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’.

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

1.1 Rationale

The Board of Management, Staff and Parents of Boherbue Comprehensive School are committed to creating a learning environment which is inclusive and supportive of all pupils in line with the mission statement:

Boherbue Comprehensive School by virtue of its position in the community endeavours to give the best education and service to its pupils and community, based on Christian values that will help all who come into contact with the school to reach their full potential.

Inclusive education relates to “the process of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from the curricula, cultures and communities of local mainstream educational institutions (Booth and Ainscow 1998).

1.2 Aims and Principles

The aims of education for students with special educational needs are set out by the NCCA (Draft) Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities, which states that the broad aims of education for students with special educational needs reflect those that are relevant to all students and include

- enabling the student to live a full life and to realise his or her full potential as a unique individual through access to an appropriate broad and balanced curriculum;
- enabling the student to function as independently as possible in society through the provision of such educational supports as are necessary to realise that potential;
- enabling the student to continue learning in adult life.

At Boherbue Comprehensive School we are committed to fostering and developing an inclusive learning environment in which all pupils, whatever their difficulty, are enabled to experience success and to achieve their potential within our school community.

The school will use the resources provided by the Department of Education and Science, both financial and personnel, to make appropriate provision and accommodations for students with special educational needs so that these students are able to participate in school life in so far as the school's resources allow.

It is school policy that all students including those with special educational needs should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

Special Educational needs provision is designed so that all pupils are enabled to:

- participate fully in the school community
- develop to their full potential
- acquire the basic personal skills, social skills, literary skills and numeracy skills needed for life
- develop in a supportive environment in which they can enhance their individual talents
- experience success
- develop a positive self image / self esteem.

1.3 Access

Every effort is made on the part of school management to ensure that the building offers a high degree of accessibility for students with disabilities.

Consideration of these disabilities and of the special needs of all students have been taken into account in finalizing all school policies and procedures.

1.4 Provision for Students with Special Educational Needs

Following consultation with parents, the additional resources allocated by the Department of Education and Science may be deployed in small class groups, in a team teaching environment and/or individual tuition as deemed appropriate for the needs of students. Thereafter, students will be assigned to mainstream classes and all teachers will be informed of the specific learning needs of the student.

- The function of learning support is to ensure that students struggling with basic literacy and numeracy are identified and provided with the supports they require to confidently meet the challenges of the curriculum available to them.
- Some students may not have a Specific Learning Difficulty / General Learning Difficulty but may need some additional learning support.
- Priority will be given to pupils who have fallen three years or more behind their chronological age level in the areas of literacy and numeracy, as identified on standardized tests.
- Priority will be given to those students identified by a psychological report as having a specific learning difficulty but who, for resource allocation purposes, fall outside the definition used by the Department of Education and Science (Circular 08/ 02).
- Support may be provided to small groups or individuals depending on Department of Education and Science allocation. Students may also receive support on the basis of withdrawal where students are exempt from Irish.

1.5 Needs Assessment

The selection process begins with consultation with parents and primary school personnel. NEPS psychologists and other support professional may also be consulted. Parental consent is obtained prior to such consultations.

New Students

- The transfer of information in the transition from Primary to Second-level is very important. The Admission Form contains information pertinent to identifying students with Special Needs. An Open Night is held each year to assist parents and the school with the process of sharing information about prospective students Parents are requested to inform the school of any special educational, medical or other need.
- Students with Special Educational Needs may be identified following consultation with the feeder Primary Schools. (Prior parental permission is obtained). Regular communication exists between the Management of Boherbue Comprehensive School and the feeder Primary schools.
- Pupils in need of extra support may be identified using standardised tests.

Existing Students

- Parents/ Guardians may contact the school directly if they have any concerns.
- Classroom teachers and Year Heads may refer students for consideration for learning support in the event of noticeable difficulties arising in class.
- If a student has not been identified as having a Special Educational Need until after enrolment, the permission of parents will be sought to have the student assessed by the appropriate professionals (N.E.P.S Psychologist, Occupational therapist, Speech and language therapist, etc.).The student may receive learning support until such an assessment is carried out.

1.6 Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the various partners involved including school management, teachers, Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO), National Education Psychological Services (NEPS), Special Needs Assistants and parents are to be found in the booklet *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational*

Needs, available to download from the Department of Education and Science website @ www.education.ie.

1.7 Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations (R.A.C.E.)

- The Special Educational Needs Department in Boherbue Comprehensive School applies to the State Exams Commission for Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations for students with special educational needs.
- The procedures of the Department of Education and Science will be strictly observed.
- Provision will also be made, where possible, to assist pupils in school examinations in keeping with State Examination provisions.

1.8 Procedure for acquiring an exemption from Irish

- Exemptions from Irish are sought where appropriate. (Circular 12/96). The Guidelines set down by the Department of Education and Science will be strictly adhered to.
- The school will make application for an exemption from Irish when a written request is made by the parents of the student and the school is furnished with a copy of a psychological report not more than two years old or other supporting documentation.

Curricular Modification

- Exemptions from French / German are considered on an individual basis in consultation with student, parents, class teachers, learning support teacher, Guidance Counsellor and Principal / Deputy Principal.

- Other curricular modifications are considered for individual students where deemed absolutely necessary. Consultation between all relevant parties is deemed essential when making such decisions.
- Where possible, the timetabled periods which become available due to such curricular modifications will be used to implement learning support interventions.

REVIEW

This policy document will be subject to review by the students, parents and Board of Management.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 6th October, 2008.