



ABBHEY VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DONEGAL TOWN

Policy on Special Educational Needs

Reviewed During 2012-13 School Year

Ratified by Board on 27/6/2013

The Abbey Vocational School is a multi denominational, co- educational second level school. The Patron is County Donegal VEC and is publicly funded by the DES.

The school operates an inclusive admissions policy.

The school is managed by the Board of Management/Principal & Deputy Principal on a day to day basis. The School offers the following programmes: J.C./T.Y./L.C./L.C.V.P./L.C.A.

Rationale

This policy document aims to outline the form that additional educational support for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) takes in the Abbey Vocational School and the philosophy that underpins it. Its purpose is to enshrine the principles of inclusive education, whereby students with SEN are provided with an appropriate education in an inclusive learning environment. It is written in the context of the 1998 Education Act and takes account of the Education for Persons with Disabilities Act (EPSEN) 2004 alongside recent national and international legislation regarding the inclusion of SEN students.

This policy bases its rationale on the principles laid out in the EPSEN Act 2004 which states that:

'The education of people with SEN shall take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs'.

'People with SEN shall have the same right to avail of and benefit from, appropriate education as do their peers'.

'People with SEN leave school with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity, in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives.'

Mission Statement:

Abbey Vocational School is dedicated to the holistic development of students in a caring environment where tolerance and respect are nurtured and valued.

Aims and Objectives

Abbey Vocational School welcomes students with SEN and in line with the EPSEN Act 2004 recognises 'the need to provide that the education of people with such needs shall whenever possible take place in an inclusive environment'. It will endeavour to enable student's access, participate in and benefit from the education provided to the fullest extent possible. Our goal of inclusion is not to ignore differences between individuals, rather inclusion aims to enable all students to belong fully to the school community and to be educated within a framework in which differences between individuals are accommodated and celebrated.

The school accepts that no student should be bullied or singled out as a consequence of their disability.

As set out in The Education Act 1998, The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004, Abbey Vocational School aims to:

- 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 special educational 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.
- 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 special educational needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.
- Ensure that special educational needs are not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.
- Ensure that students with special educational 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.
- Co-ordinate the advice, guidance and support of other agencies in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Ensure the effective and efficient use of resources.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of practice in support of students with special educational needs.

Through the implementation of this policy, we in the Abbey Vocational School strive to

- Improve learning for all our students
- Develop functional literacy and numeracy
- Develop independent learning strategies within their own ability range
- Develop high levels of self-esteem and a positive attitude to school and learning

- Improve communication skills
- Reduce any sense of isolation/negative labelling
- Involve parents in supporting their child's learning
- Promote collaboration among teachers

We see this policy as a reflection of our current practice. This policy should be viewed as a working document and be reviewed on an annual basis.

Arrangements for Students with Resource/Learning Support

In consideration of the definitions relevant to this policy the School considers a student as being in need of learning support if he/she:

- Is recognised as being at the 10th percentile or below on a standardised test and/or following an assessment by the relevant professional personnel;
- Is failing to achieve in school due to specific personal circumstances;
- A student is defined as having special educational needs if she/he has a learning/physical difficulty, which calls for support provision to be made for him/her;
- Students with a disability that prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities provided for students of the same age;
- Students, who following the correct identification procedures, have been assessed as having special educational needs by an educational psychologist and are sanctioned resource support. At present the Department of Education and Science defines this as the 2nd percentile or below and grant hours to these students accordingly.

Access:

It is the policy of the Abbey Vocational School that the term 'each student' in the mission statement includes students with SEN, students with other learning differences and students from different environments and cultures. The principle aim of this document is to enable these students to access, participate in and benefit from the education provided in The Abbey Vocational School to the fullest extent possible.

Roles and Functions of Key Personnel:

The role of SEN support is a collaborative responsibility shared by all: BOM, Principal, Deputy Principal, SEN Team, Support Teachers, Subject Teachers, Year Heads, Form Teachers, Guidance Counsellor, SNAs. Parents and students also have a vital role to play as they are consulted at all times in relation to decision made about their child.

Role of the Board of Management

- To ensure that all students with learning support/special educational needs are identified and assessed;
- To ensure that the school has a special educational needs policy in place, to monitor the implementation of that policy and to ensure its evaluation;
- To ensure that a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum is provided in the school to ensure in as far as is practical that students with special educational needs leave school with the skills necessary to participate to the level of their capacity in an inclusive way in society;
- To ensure that necessary resources are sought on behalf of students with special educational needs;
- To ensure that a special educational needs co-ordinator is appointed from among the teaching staff;
- To promote the development of positive partnerships with parents and other relevant agencies/personnel and to ensure that parents are informed of their child's special educational needs and how these needs are being met;
- To ensure that parents are consulted with regard to and invited to participate in the making of all significant decisions concerning their child's education;
- To ensure that the Special Educational Needs Policy forms part of the School plan;
- To develop a whole school approach to literacy and numeracy under Section 14 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004;
- To ensure that an awareness of special educational needs is inculcated in students in the school.

The Role of the Principal

- On behalf of the Board of management of the Abbey Vocational School, the Principal has responsibility for all aspects of the day-to-day management of policy and provision for students with special educational needs.

- The Principal may delegate certain functions to appropriate teachers (as outlined in Section 18 of the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004);
- To appoint a special educational needs co-ordinator from amongst the staff and to work closely with the co-ordinator;
- In consultation with the Special Needs Co-ordinator ensure that an Individual Education Plan is prepared for relevant students in the given timeframe (i.e. one month from the date of issue of an appropriate assessment);
- On drafting and/or reviewing such plans, the Principal shall ensure that cognisance is taken, at the appropriate time, of the needs of the student to continue his/her education or training on becoming an adult;
- To inform the Board of Management of issues, which are relevant to special educational needs;
- In consultation with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and other relevant personnel to liaise with the Department of Education and Science regarding needs and provision. This also includes applications for reasonable accommodations and exemptions in relation to state examinations as well as assessments;
- To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources, including the allocation of resource hours and funds;
- To establish a ‘Special Needs Support Team’ within the school with a specific remit to ensure identification of and support for students with special educational needs;
- To promote a whole school approach to special educational needs, to make all staff aware of their responsibilities in this area and to facilitate appropriate staff development in this area;
- To promote the development of positive partnerships with parents of students with special educational needs;
- To ensure that procedures exist for consultation with feeder primary schools with regard to the enrolment of new students with special educational needs;

Role of the Subject Teacher

In the Abbey Vocational School, the academic progress of students throughout the school rests in the first instance with the subject teacher. In order to ensure that as a school we meet the needs of all our students, subject teachers are encouraged to:

- Be aware of the School’s policy and procedures (as outlined in this document) for dealing with students with special educational needs;
- Seek advice from the SEN Department regarding students with special educational needs;

- Take responsibility for their own continuous professional development particularly with regard to high incidence difficulties e.g. Dyslexia & Specific Language difficulties;
- Develop an attitude of ownership to the education of students in their classes with Special Educational Needs;
- Where a student has an SNA the subject teacher should plan how to most effectively engage the SNA in consultation with the resource teacher or the SEN Co-ordinator;
- Support/encourage independence in the student. This is particularly important for Senior Cycle students.

Subject teachers must have due regard to the rights of students with special educational needs. The school recognises that it is the professional duty of each subject teacher to support these students using the strategies, which will have been made available to them.

Specialist Teacher with Resource Hours

The role of the subject teacher who has Resource Hours in the SEN department is to support and contribute to the individual learning needs of SEN students. This teacher formulates programmes and targets to support the SEN student.

Guidance Teacher/Counsellor

The role of the Guidance Counsellor within the SEN team consists of the following:

- Counselling and personal, educational and career development;
- Personal and social development;
- Psychological testing;
- Career information management;
- Consultation with parents and staff;
- Consultation with community organisations;
- Vocational preparation – job search skills, preparation for work experience;
- Referrals to other professionals and agencies;
- Evaluation of the guidance and counselling needs and services.

The Guidance Counsellor

The guidance counsellor is a member of the Special Educational Need Support Team and works with other members of the team in facilitating the provision of education for students with special educational needs and their inclusion in the

school. The guidance counsellor works closely with Year Heads, Special Needs and Learning Support Departments to identify students requiring further attention.

The guidance counsellor may assist with arrangements for the successful transfer of students to the Abbey Vocational School and in gathering information about students, including those with special educational needs, before their transfer from primary school.

The guidance counsellor has an important role in assisting all students; including those with special educational needs at the different stages of schooling. To facilitate this, students and parents are welcome to make appointments with the Guidance counsellor.

This is particularly encouraged for students progressing from Junior to Senior Cycle. Students in their final year are offered appointments with the guidance counsellor to support them in making career decisions.

It is acknowledged that students with special educational needs may require greater support at formal transfer points in their school career and the guidance counsellor will be particularly aware of these students.

Prior to entry to The Abbey Vocational School First Year students are tested using the C.A.T.3 tests. The guidance counsellor works closely with the Principal, Deputy Principal and Special Educational Needs team in the organisation of these Tests.

At key stages, the guidance counsellor is responsible for co-ordinating a number of assessments including the DAT's and Special Interest Tests.

When appropriate, the guidance counsellor is available to staff who may want to seek advice/relevant information regarding students with special educational needs and how they can best be supported in school.

The School Guidance Plan for the Abbey Vocational School was drawn up in consultation with teaching personnel including the Learning Support and Special Educational Needs Team.

Role of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

The Special Needs Assistant provides care assistance to named students who have special educational needs. They make a valuable contribution to the school's capacity to provide inclusive education to these students.

The Special Educational Needs Department and Year Head work collaboratively in devising an appropriate strategy plan for a student with special educational

needs. The SNA is made aware of this plan and given guidance on their role in the successful implementation of this plan.

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

The duties of the Special Needs Assistants involve tasks of a non teaching nature such as:

- Attending both Staff and Departmental meetings when appropriate;
- Assisting / escorting students on school trips;
- Other appropriate duties as may be determined as necessary, for example; giving special assistance for students with particular difficulties such as helping special needs students with typing, writing or other use of equipment;
- Assisting with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene and being mindful of health and safety needs of the student;
- Assisting with examinations (if appropriate);
- Assisting the teacher in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreation and in movement from one classroom to another;
- Accompanying individual or small groups who may be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom;
- A Special Needs Assistant should not be asked to withdraw a student from a classroom unless this is a strategy that has been agreed by the SEN Head. In such instances teachers will have been informed;
- General assistance of the subject teacher, under the direction of the Principal/Deputy Principal of a non-teaching nature;
- Special Needs Assistants may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers;
- In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class;
- Participation with school development planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school development process;
- Engagement with parents of special needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by school management of the pupils and the school;
- Special Needs Assistants may be re-assigned to other appropriate work when special needs students are absent or when particularly urgent work demands arise.
- Special Needs Assistants are expected to treat all matters relating to school business and their work, as strictly confidential.

The Role of the Learning Support / Resource Teacher

Resource Teacher

The role of the Resource teacher is to provide support for students with SEN as per NCSE Code Sheet. The Resource Teacher has responsibility for assessing and recording students' needs and progress, setting specific targets, team-teaching and assisting teachers in adapting the curriculum. The Resource Teacher also has a responsibility for meeting and advising parents and meeting with relevant professionals.

At the Abbey Vocational School, the resource teacher works closely with students who have special educational needs. The role of the resource teacher is wide-ranging and varied. Resource teachers and subject teachers should work in partnership thus ensuring that students are supported as effectively as possible.

The resource teachers is responsible for providing diagnostic assessments for students at regular intervals, so as to discover where they are now, how have they progressed and decide (in collaboration with other relevant parties) how a student's education should and can be furthered.

The resource teacher has a very good insight into a student's needs and when appropriate can provide advice to subject teachers as to the teaching methodologies best suited to that student.

The resource teacher provides direct teaching to a student with special educational needs either to reinforce the teaching that takes place in the classroom or to improve upon the core skills that may be necessary to successfully access the second level curriculum.

At times withdrawal from the classroom may not be the most appropriate means of supporting the student.

When appropriate the resource teacher is invited to contribute at meetings involving parents and/or outside agencies.

Learning Support Teacher

To support and remediate the literacy and numeracy needs of students. The LS teacher has responsibility for diagnostic assessment, programme planning, consultation with parents, teachers and pupils, communication with whole staff and for teaching, monitoring and evaluating students' progress.

The SEN Team

Principal/Deputy Principal, Resource Teachers, Learning Support Teacher, Guidance Counsellor.

Information: Incoming First Years

In making provision for students with SEN it is advisable that schools and parents share the following information:

- Current resources availed of (all types)
- Current placement
- Assessments/referrals
- IEP

To facilitate the transition to second level, the school's provisions include;

- Prior visits of student/parent(s)/primary school personnel to the schools to discuss concerns etc;
- On enrolment evening parents are encouraged to meet with members of SEN team;
- Meetings may be arranged if necessary;
- Reports etc are requested from parents;
- NEPs forward review information;
- Liaison with SEN team prior to assessment tests in early February ;
- Staff conducting tests are aware of difficulties which SEN students may have and may offer alternative work to some students;
- Results of assessment tests collated, reviewed and maintained by SEN team. We do not disclose test results to parents, however where a concern arises a meeting will be arranged to discuss these concerns. All further screening occurs with parental permission;
- Member of SEN team attends any relevant multi disciplinary meetings;
- Resources are applied for following these meetings and/or meetings with parents;
- Principal/ Deputy Principal or their representative visit each feeder primary school during last term;
- First Years are given a full day at the beginning of the school year for induction purposes with no other students present. This is of particular benefit to SEN students as they get used to a new setting;
- Parents are informed of Senior student's progress by regular report, at parent teacher meetings and individual meetings, if required. All files pertaining to SEN students are kept securely in the Special Educational Needs Room.

In the past, the information on incoming students with Special Educational Needs was communicated to teachers and special needs assistants at the opening staff meeting each year. This was done by working through a list of students while the staff took notes. From 2013 onwards, with the introduction of new school

management software, we will enter this information under the SEN tab of each student with Special Needs. The teachers will then have full access to this information.

Selection of students for support

Identification process for students not in receipt of Resource Hours

An important role of the SEN department is to establish the procedures necessary for the preliminary screening of students by the class teacher and subsequent selection of pupils for more detailed diagnostic assessment. Central to this process is the class teacher and the parent.

The Abbey Vocational School selects students for additional support on the basis of all or a combination of the following:

- Psychological Report
- Allocated resource hours
- Report from feeder primary school
- Entrance test (screening)
- Request from parents/carers/student
- School based referral

School based identification

A class teacher, form teacher and/or Year Head can refer any student they are concerned about to the SEN department. Referral forms are available on the SEN notice board in the staffroom.

A referral made by a class teacher or a form teacher must be passed to the Anchor Person who will begin a broader profile. This information is then passed to the Year Head. The SEN team identifies which supports need to be put in place to help the students based on a combination of the following:

- Informal assessment and consultation
- Formal assessment and review of existing data

Possible outcomes of the above assessments are:

- No need for further action
- Need for monitoring/support in mainstream classroom
- Purposeful withdrawal

The input of parents is very important and welcomed at the Abbey Vocational School.

Model of SEN Provision

Support offered aims to be flexible, responsive, inclusive and student focused. In assessing and deciding which students need to be in receipt of supplementary teaching and which students may benefit from support within the mainstream context the following options either on their own or a combination are considered:

- Support Teaching
- Inclusion of SNA in specific classes
- Small group withdrawal
- Individual withdrawal/Time Out
- Curricular reduction

The period of intervention for each student is dependent on the nature and extent of their individual need and is discussed with stakeholders.

SEN support is timetabled in some or all of the following:

- During Irish classes
- During non exam classes
- Against some options at Junior Cycle e.g. French/TG/SEN Business/History/SEN

SEN support lessens at Senior Cycle but is still available if students require it and if resources are available in the case of learning support.

Model of Organisation

Whole School Context

The Abbey Vocational School organises first year classes in a mixed ability setting. Each first year group is formed with a deliberate mix of all ability ranges. However for some SEN students a full range of subjects is not followed and support classes are provided. Post first year some banding occurs in certain subjects.

Anchor System

Each year group has a SEN team members acting as anchor. The anchor has overall responsibility for co coordinating and allocating resources to SEN students in that particular year group. The same anchor may act for more than one year group. The anchor is a point of contact for parents, Year Heads and students. The system ensures a tight knit referral system and allows for comprehensive tracking for all students.

Identification Process

An important role of the SEN department is to establish the procedures necessary for the preliminary screening of pupils for more detailed diagnostic assessment. Central to this process is the class teacher and the parent.

SEN students who present mid-year

If a psychological assessment is available, with parents' permission, a summary of needs and recommendations is forwarded to all relevant staff.

In the case of students without a psychological assessment, whose profile warrants inclusion in Resource/Learning Support caseload, teachers are notified of need and support using 'Just to let you know' slips.

Record Keeping

A minute's folder is kept recording all meetings by or involving SEN Team/personnel.

The SEN department maintains an up to date record of all student referrals.

All relevant documentation including every communication with parent, teacher or other is recorded in this file.

Planning and Developing Inclusive Curricula: Teaching and Learning

The Abbey Vocational School provides the widest possible range of programmes to suit each student's individual learning style:

- Junior Certificate
- Transition Year
- Leaving Certificate
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
- Leaving Certificate Applied

Teaching Methodologies

A wide variety of teaching and learning strategies

- A variety of teaching strategies and approaches including co operative learning
- Multi-sensory approaches
- Differentiation

Liaison with other professionals

It is often the role of the Resource/learning Support teacher to attend meetings with and liaise closely with a number of out-of-school agencies such as those listed below.

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

The NCSE has been established as an independent statutory body. The council has authority to:

Carry out research and provide expert advice to the Minister for Education & Science on the educational needs of children with disabilities and the provision of related services.

Provide for a range of services at local and national level in order that the educational needs of children with disabilities are identified and provided for.

Co-ordinate with health authorities, schools and other relevant bodies, the provision of education and related support services to children with disabilities.

Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO)

The SENO represents the local delivery aspect of the work of the NCSE. There are approximately 70 SENOs employed nationally and all have a qualification and work experience relating to service delivery to children with SEN. SENOs have responsibility for:

Coordinating and facilitating the delivery of educational services to children with SEN.

Focal point of contact for parents and schools

Process applications for resources for children with SEN

Regular and detailed engagement with organisations such as health authorities, the DES, the Inspectorate and National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

NEPS

The Abbey Vocational School has access to a senior psychologist from NEPS. The service that is delivered to us by NEPS operates under the following framework:

- Consultation about individual students
- Recommendations and advice on individual student's needs
- Advice on classroom strategies and resources
- Advisory work in relation to SEN policy and practice
- Consultation and recommendations in relation to RACE

Other Agencies involved with SEN Department

- Visiting Teacher Service
- HSE

- Youthreach
- Dyslexia Association of Ireland
- Irish Learning Support Association
- Irish Association for Teachers in Special Education
- Special Needs Assistants Group (SNAG)
- Irish Autism Action

Monitoring and Review of SEN Policy

In order to keep up to date with changing and new information in this area this policy will be reviewed each year. It will be monitored by the BOM in consultation with the Principal and the SEN Team.

December 2012

The school utilises standardised norm-referenced student assessment on entry to target and inform whole-school policy on advancing educational achievement in all subject disciplines.

Test used for assessment purposes at The Abbey Vocational School:

nferNelson Cognitive Abilities Test 3 Third Edition

On-site nferNelson dyslexia screener

The tests assess an individual's ability to reason with and manipulate to track resource geometric or figural patterns.

The results provide knowledge of areas of relative strength and weakness and will help the students and the school to use strengths most effectively and to compensate for weakness.

Traditionally tests such as these have been a good way of predicting educational progress. The tests also are helpful to the careers counsellor as they highlight areas of strength in possible future career paths.

Provisional Goals

To move from the IEP pilot stage to established protocols

To develop policies and supports appropriate to exceptionally able students.

To formalise the student register in order to track resources provided and structures student outcomes.

To engage in an audit of the staff's professional development needs to support mixed ability teaching and the full inclusion of students with SEN. To contribute to the promotion of literacy and numeracy within the Abbey vocational School