

Shimna Integrated College

Special Educational Needs

Learning Support Policy

Updated June 2017

LEARNING SUPPORT POLICY

The Philosophy

The learning support policy for the college is based around the guiding principles for the college which were established by the founding parents in March 1993. The college was established with the firm commitment to all ability teaching and learning: *“The College cannot be truly integrated unless children of all abilities are encouraged to attend.”* As a college we have also for many years admitted students with a wide spectrum of physical disabilities and medical conditions. We are well placed to satisfy the requirements of the Special Educational Needs Disability Order due to the accessibility of our building and the structures of our learning environment.

All Ability Teaching and Learning

The foundation of our learning support policy is a child-centred approach throughout the curriculum, facilitated by a commitment to class sizes of approximately twenty students and timetable slots to suit the specific demands of each subject. It is our philosophy that **learning support is the responsibility of each teacher**. Each teacher is responsible for challenge, differentiation and support within the classroom. Therefore the learning support department is made up of *all* teachers under the leadership of our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). **The college has a policy of supporting children in class, rather than withdrawing them from class.**

It is our belief that **every student has special educational needs** and the admissions policy at Shimna reflects the reality that children with a wide range of differing abilities will work together in the classroom. **An all ability classroom works best if every student’s needs are seen as special.** This includes those with the potential to be high academic achievers. Central to this policy is the need to encourage autonomous learning and empathy with other students working in the same classroom. The Board of Governors will monitor physical access on an ongoing basis as stipulated in the Special Education Needs Disability Order (SENDO) 1995.

Aims of the learning support policy:

- 1 to assist every student who has learning needs across the full academic and physical ability range;
- 2 to enable and empower all members of staff to encourage learning and achievement for all students;
- 3 to promote the early identification of students with special needs through the Pathways system;
4. to encourage and enable each department and subject area to take responsibility for the learning needs of each student and to ensure the availability of appropriate resources;
- 5 to implement the Code of Practice and the SENDO;
- 6 to work with parents/guardians as and when necessary to enhance the learning experience of their children;
- 7 to work with outside agencies as and when appropriate.

SEN Support in Practice

Year 8

Year 8 students are placed in **all ability classes** of approximately twenty two students. Information is gathered from application forms, and from feeder primary schools. Information on students transferring with SEN is also gleaned from the Education Authority's SIMS database network. As teachers get to know their students they may come across some undocumented needs.

Teachers should approach the SENCo and submit a Pathways form, with evidence, for any student about whom they are concerned. The SENCo will work with the subject teachers and parents/guardians to agree suitable targets and strategies, and compile an IEP. Students with specific and verified literacy difficulties may receive extra time etc. in assessments at KS3.

Year 9

Students are in all ability group classes, except for mathematics where they are set in similar ability groups to prepare for tiered entry at GCSE.

Year 10

Students are in all ability classes, except for mathematics and science where they are set in similar ability groups across form groups. Special arrangements made for individual students during year 8 and year 9 will continue pending formal assessment in Year 10. Students on the register are formally assessed for special arrangements in external exams during year 10. For students to be eligible for extra time in public examinations they must need, and be in the habit of using, extra time during internal examinations.

Year 11 and 12

Year 11 and 12 students follow the GCSE subject options they have chosen. Subject teachers will decide the final tier of entry based on the student's ability and performance.

Throughout the year there will be regular opportunities at department and pastoral care meetings to exchange information about individual students from all year groups. It is essential that subject teachers communicate with the form teacher, their Head of Department, and the SENCo about any student they feel needs a literacy assessment.

Learning Support Resources

Many departments offer weekly after school support clubs or revision sessions between October and May; e.g. Maths club runs from 3.30-4.30 pm on Wednesdays.

All students are encouraged to attend homework club in computer room 237, after school from Monday to Thursday. This is supervised by our teaching assistants.

Students with recognised handwriting difficulties are encouraged to word process essays and coursework where possible. Students with a statement of special education

needs who are entitled to funded tuition hours receive weekly one to one tuition in literacy and/or numeracy outside of timetabled lessons.

The Code of Practice Relating to Special Needs

The Code of Practice for special Needs is part of the Education (N.I.) Order 1996 which was implemented in **September 1998**. The Code provides us with guidance on provision for students who have special needs. The meaning and requirements of each stage are outlined below:

Stage 1

Subject teachers express concern and inform the SENCo through the Pathways system. The SENCo collects information from other subject teachers, form teacher and an assessment of needs is made. Parents/guardians are consulted. Class teachers and SENCo determine provision for the student. The student's progress is monitored and reviewed.

Stage 2

The subject teacher retains responsibility for working with the student in the classroom, assists in the drawing up of an Education Plan for the student and monitors and reviews progress.

Stage 3

The subject teacher retains responsibility for working with the student in the classroom and implements the education plan. Appropriate specialist help from outside the school is requested (e.g. Educational Psychology /ICT assessment).

Stage 4

The subject teacher retains responsibility for working with the student in the classroom. The SENCo formally refers the student to the SEELB Board to request a statutory assessment.

Stage 5

The subject teacher retains responsibility for working with the student in the classroom. The Board, having gathered evidence through statutory assessment, may decide to issue a statement. The final statement sets out exactly how the child's needs should be met in a mainstream school. This could involve funded one to one tuition or the provision of classroom assistance.

All staff have an up to date copy of the SEN policy.

A register of students who have a special educational need is made available to staff by the SENCo.

A separate **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**, outlining the student's difficulties and suggested general targets and strategies is provided to teachers for each student on the register. Teachers should annotate this appropriately. **Education Board advice booklets on specific needs are available in the staffroom.**

The register and IEPs are confidential and must be stored securely.

The Role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

- To oversee the implementation of the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs;
- To collect information from feeder schools and other agencies about students arriving with identified special educational needs;
- To retain a record of each child identified as having special educational needs, the area of need and the action taken by the class teacher, learning support coordinator and the college as a whole;
- To help identify more able students and ensure their needs are addressed;
- To help identify students with specific learning difficulties;
- To monitor the progress of all identified students and make reports when necessary;
- To liaise with external agencies;
- To liaise with parents/guardians of students identified as having special needs;
- To facilitate annual review meetings and action agreed outcomes;
- To arrange relevant documentary evidence for special examination consideration;
- To encourage students to use the learning support such as after school homework club and subject clubs to enhance their learning;
- To encourage staff to make suggestions/recommendations on the learning support policy and learning support resource base;
- To attend the necessary in-service training offered by outside agencies and to disseminate the information to colleagues.

The Role of the Teaching Assistant

Below are some guidelines recommended in the SEN Manual for schools (1996) and the SEELB 'Guidance for non-teaching staff working in schools' which each classroom assistant should read.

The teaching assistants working in the college are each funded directly by the Department of Education to give individual support to named students.

The purpose of the teaching assistant is to enable students with special needs to access the curriculum so that it is broad, balanced and relevant to her/his needs. As the funded hours permit, each assistant will be in class when the child is in class and work at the direction of the teacher to support learning.

Teaching assistants are valued colleagues in the classroom. They are part of the whole-school team approach to addressing Special Needs and have an invaluable contribution to make towards the education of their children.

The presence of the teaching assistant should not become a form of segregation for the child. It could be overwhelming for a child to have one person stay with her/him for the whole day or week. Some children may find it impossible to integrate fully under those circumstances. As long as the teaching assistant is used to further the individual child's access to the curriculum, then a sensible balance between work with the individual, work with a group containing the individual, and general class support is appropriate.

Discipline is the teacher's overall responsibility, but it may well be an issue for a new teaching assistant. Teachers' support on this issue will be appreciated by the teaching assistant, as their primary role is to raise self esteem and to encourage autonomy.

Within the classroom the teaching assistant will help to run any teaching programmes the teacher may have for the particular student. They can help as appropriate with physical skills, hearing readers, note taking, dressing, undressing, adapting and preparing materials and organizing resources, displaying children's work, giving feedback and suggesting development.

As the teaching assistant is with the child(ren) all day and in all subjects s/he will get to know their child(ren) well. The assistant is therefore well placed to know the strengths and weaknesses of the child across the curriculum, and can be consulted by the teacher. The class teacher can agree working arrangements with the teaching assistant. For example, can the assistant give permission for a child to go to the toilet or mark a child's work? If a teacher and teaching assistant need planning time with each other, it should be arranged at a time convenient to both.

Deployment outside Classroom Duties.

When the assistant's designated child is absent the teaching assistant will be redeployed at the direction of Deborah McDowell, who oversees the day to day allocation of teaching assistant time and duties. The teaching assistant's first priority is to ensure that notes and homeworks are kept up to date. In the case of prolonged absence of the child the assistant's priority is to liaise between the college and parents/guardians, and keeping parents supplied with work to be completed at home where the child's condition permits.

It may be that another assistant is absent and their child needs assistance, or other children in the same class may benefit from the general assistance available. The class teacher should have alternative work for the teaching assistant, as the assistant needs to feel gainfully employed. On the rare occasion where the class teacher may not need the teaching assistant Deborah McDowell will have contingency plans ready.

Opportunities for teaching assistant development and training are capitalised upon when students are absent. Observing other colleagues, reading useful documents, working with a teacher on basic skills training, observing children with other types of special need or of different ages, are just some of the useful activities that might be undertaken. Teaching assistants themselves will often have a clear idea which activity would have greatest the benefit.