

**Moyle Park College**

**Policy Document**

Educational Provision for students with learning  
difficulties/Special Educational Needs

Approved by the Board of Management  
2006

# Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. School Prospectus**
  - 2.1 Inclusion*
- 3. Definition**
- 4. Key Objectives**
- 5. Admission to the school**
- 6. Wheelchair Access**
- 7. Transition From Primary School to Secondary School**
- 8. The learning Support / Resource Department**
  - 8.1 History of Learning Support*
  - 8.2 Class Assistance*
- 9. The Curriculum**
- 10. In school support**
- 11. Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations**
- 12. External Agencies**
  - 12.1 Psychologist (National Education Psychological Services)*
  - 12.2 Other external agencies*
- 13. Individualised Planning**
  - 13.1 Individual Educational Plan {IEP}*
- 14. Evaluation**
- 15. Parents: Communication and Participation**
- 16. Students**
- 17. Grievance Procedure**
- 18. Additional Resource**
- 19. Conclusion**

## **1. Introduction**

This policy document aims to outline the form that additional educational support for students with learning difficulties or special educational needs takes in Moyle Park College and the philosophy, which underpins it. It is written in the context of the Education Act 1998 especially sections 2,6,7,9,13,15,21, and 33 and the equal status act 2000. It also takes into account the education for persons with Special Needs Act 2004 and the persons with Disabilities Act 2005.

## **2. School Prospectus**

This document should be read in conjunction with the school prospectus.

### *2.1 Inclusion*

It is the policy of the school that the term “all” students in the vision statement *includes* students with learning difficulties or special educational needs. The principal aim of this policy document is to enable these students to access, participate in and benefit from the education normally provided in the school to the fullest extent possible. To achieve this aim, these students require additional support, which can only be adequately provided where the school is given the necessary additional resources by the Department of Education and Science.

## **3 Definition:**

Students with learning difficulties or special educational needs are:

- ❑ Students whose educational difficulties or special educational needs prevent or hinder them from benefiting adequately from the education normally provided for students of the same age.
- ❑ See Special Education Review Committee report 1993 p.18.

Note for the purpose of this policy document, the term “special needs” should be understood to include the terms “learning difficulties” and “special educational needs” unless otherwise stated.

#### **4. Key Objectives**

The general educational objectives for students with special educational needs are the same as for all students. Key objectives are functional literacy and numeracy and social skills training.

The main aim is to help each pupil reach his full potential according to his capabilities.

#### **5. Admission to the school**

More detail on admission to the school may be found in the school's Admissions Policy.

#### **6. Wheelchair Access**

It is the school objective to make the school buildings, general classrooms and specialist classrooms more accessible to people with physical disabilities and to take measures when necessary, to ensure that these students have real access to the full curriculum.

#### **7. Transition From Primary Schools to Secondary School.**

Regular communication exists between the Principal, Career Guidance Department, Special Needs Department and the main feeder primary schools.

An open day for students and an open night for parents is held each year to assist parents and the college with the process of sharing information about prospective students with special needs.

Parents are required to inform the school of any special educational needs or medical needs and to forward psychology/medical reports when making an application for a place in the college. We would expect Parental consent for a transfer of information from Primary Schools.

An assessment is held in March for all incoming students. The English and Mathematics scores are used to help identify the particular needs of students who may not have been formally identified in their Primary School. This greatly helps to improve the preparation of the provisions needed for students with special needs.

#### **8. The Learning Support/ Resource Department**

##### *8.1 History of learning support*

Moyle Park College is proud of the contribution it has made to the teaching of students with special educational needs down through the years. In 1978, under the leadership of brother Peter Hegarty, the first ex quota teacher was appointed to the College. However, the Marist Brothers were already enlightened in this area. In 1976,

a special class was established providing a full time teacher dedicated to their special educational needs. Since this time, the college has a proud record of adapting to the needs of its students. In the 2006-2007 academic year, nine members of staff were involved in the teaching of students with special educational needs..

The department responsible for providing additional support for students with learning difficulties or special educational needs is referred to as the Resource and Learning Support Department.

### *8.2 Class Assistants*

The special needs assistant does not necessarily hold an educational qualification (although some do have advanced degrees and educational qualifications). The entry requirement for the position is a pass in Irish, English, and Mathematics at junior-cert level. The special needs assistant is an important member of the support staff for children with special needs.

The class Assistants support students and teachers within the classroom.

- Mobility for those with physical disabilities
- Assisting with organisation and task completion, for those who might be unusually distractible.
- Providing guidance during free play situation for those with mobility problems.

The Class assistant also plays a part in some of the other forms of learning support within the school.

## **9 The Curriculum**

It is school policy that all students, including students with special needs, should have access to the broad and balanced curriculum provided in the school. Students with special needs require more flexibility of choice. Special care is taken with option subjects chosen.

Key issues here are equality of access and parental and student choice.

## **10 In school support**

Support is currently provided to small groups, which contain both learning support students and students with special educational needs students in one group. This additional support is organised by the Recourse and Learning Support Department.

Support is delivered to students on the basis of withdrawal where the students are exempt from Irish or do not attend a second option subject. A system of staggered withdrawal is in place for students who do not fall into either of these categories so that they are not consistently missing out on any one subject.

## **11 Reasonable Accommodations in state examinations**

The Resource and Learning Support Department applies for Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations for students with learning difficulties or special educational needs each year in consultation with the parents, the child and the schools designated NEPS psychologist.

## **12 External Agencies:**

### *12.1 Psychologist (National Educational Psychological Services)*

The learning support department/ resource department is in regular contact with NEPS Psychologist whose support is almost exclusively aimed at students with special needs.

The Psychologist supports these students:

- In the application for resources
- In the application for reasonable accommodations in state examinations
- By offering advice to students and parents as well as to teachers
- By counselling students
- By carrying out Psychological Assessments free of charge.

Parents may choose to have their child privately assessed.

The Psychologist serves a number of schools in the general area and in recent years visits our school approximately eight times a year.

### *12.2 Other external Agencies and Personnel*

Other agencies the school has dealings with are:

- Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENCO)
- Department of child Psychiatry, ERHA. St. James Hospital
- The Schools Completion Programme
- Traveller Liaison Officer
- Various Medical Specialists

## **13. Individualised Planning**

The Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004 requires that each child diagnosed with special needs should have a n Individual Education Plan drawn up to meet the individuals needs. Relevant sections of this act include section 3, 4, 7 and 9.

### *13.1 Individual Educational Plan {IEP}*

An IEP is the written description of the programme tailored to fit a child's unique educational needs. It describes the special educational and related services specifically designed to meet the needs of a child with special educational needs.

The programme is developed at one or more IEP meetings, and its provisions are detailed in writing in a planning documents. Effective intervention depends on the co-operation between teachers, students and parents and often the involvement of other professionals.

Pending the implementation of the EPSEN Act, (Education for persons with Special Education Needs Act 2004) it is school policy to continue the process already begun of individual diagnosis, planning, provision and evaluation, especially for students with greatest need.

#### **14. Evaluation**

The evaluation of educational provision is a complex process whether normal provision or additional support is being evaluated. Basic success in the state examinations and basic literacy and numeracy are interlinked. The state examinations are widely used in schools as a blunt measurement of achievement. The success of students with special needs in school in state examination is highly valued, especially by the students themselves and by their parents. Teacher observation, class test and house examination are important regular forms of evaluation for students with special needs.

#### **15. Parents: Communication and Participation**

Communication between teachers and parents has traditionally been excellent in Moyle Park College. The school believes parents play a positive and guiding supportive role in student education. An objective of the Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill is “to ensure that parents have a central role in all important decisions concerning the education for their children.” (Explanatory Memorandum p.1) This is already the case for parents of students in Moyle Park College. It is essential that teachers inform and involve parents when additional support is being provided.

#### **16. Students**

The general body of students respond positively to the education provided in the school and students with special needs are particularly appreciative of the additional support provided. Students tend to play the role of recipient of both normal provision and of additional support. This policy encourages them to play a more active role – this is generally more practicable in a support context than in normal class.

#### **17. Grievance Procedure**

Parents / Students who are concerned and who wish to discuss or make suggestions about any aspect of educational provision should approach the relevant teacher, class tutor, year head or learning support / resource coordinator. If necessary, an issue can be dealt with by the Principal, Deputy Principal or Board of Management.

## **18. Additional Resource**

Clearly, the additional support outlined above is dependant on additional resources. Most of these additional resources are granted annually and it is school policy to seek a more permanent arrangement, e.g. (ex-quota Resource Post)

## **19. Conclusion**

It is important to re-emphasise the principle objective of the *additional education support* outlined in this document, namely, to enable students with special needs to access, participate in the benefit from the education *normally provided* in the school to the fullest extent possible.