

FRANCISCAN COLLEGE GORMANSTON

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY.

MISSION STATEMENT

Franciscan College Gormanston is an educational establishment wherein Catholic values are promoted in accordance with the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Its aim is to create an environment that is safe, a centre of learning committed to the personal development of each individual student, and where the dignity of all is promoted and cherished.

It will strive to create accountable and principled students in the Ireland of today and in the wider world, in accordance with our Franciscan tradition for the glory of God and the honour of Ireland.

Scope of the Policy;

- This policy applies to all students attending Franciscan College Gormanston and who have special educational needs.
- This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Enrolment Policy and The Code of Behaviour.

Aims and Objectives;

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., Franciscan College Gormanston 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 educational needs have the same right to avail of, and benefit from education as students who do not have those needs.
- 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 all members of staff are aware of the special educational needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with educational needs.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of practice in support of students with educational needs.
- Encourage and foster positive partnership with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support for students at home.

Roles and Responsibilities.

1. The Role of the Board of Management.

The overall responsibility for the provision of education to all students, including students with educational needs, lies with the Board of Management. In this regard the board should

- Ensure that all students with learning support/special educational needs are identified, assessed and provided with appropriate support and intervention within the limits of the school's resources as provided by the Department of Education and Science.
- Ensure that the school has a special educational needs policy in place, to monitor the implementation of that policy and to ensure its evaluation.
- 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.

- Ensure that the necessary resources are sought on behalf of students with special educational needs.
- Promote the development of positive partnership 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.
- Ensure that the Special Educational Needs Policy forms part of the School Plan.

2. The Role of the Principal.

On behalf of the Board of Management of Franciscan College, Gormanston the Principal has responsibility for all aspects of the day-to-day management of the 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) this may include;

- To appoint a special educational needs coordinator and to work closely with the co-ordinator.
- 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, make all staff aware of their responsibilities in this area and to facilitate appropriate staff development in this area.
- 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.
- Subject to his/her overall statutory responsibilities, the principal may delegate the performance of specific responsibilities to other staff members; including members of the special educational needs support team.
- To ensure the effective use of resources, including the allocation of resource hours and funds.
- To promote the development of positive partnership with parents of students with special educational needs.
- To ensure that procedures for consultation with feeder primary schools with regard to enrolment of new students with special educational needs are followed.
- To inform the BOM of any issue that is relevant to special educational needs.

3. The Role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator.

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator is a core member of the SEN 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 Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and the SEN team, endeavour to create whole school ownership in the management of Special Educational Needs.
- The Co-ordinator works closely with the Principal on the day-to-day management of the provision of Special Educational needs in the school and by arrangement will assume an overall responsibility for co-ordinating the school's provision for the inclusion of students with special educational needs. This will include the establishment and regular monitoring of the SEN register, including regular communication with staff.
- The Co-ordinator will assist in programme planning for individual students with special educational needs and, as appropriate, provide advice to teacher colleagues on curriculum, teaching and learning strategies, textbooks and other teacher and learning resources.
- The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator provides each Year Head with a timetable for each student allocated resource hours. The name of the allocated resource teacher is included on this timetable. Resource teachers and subject teachers should work in partnership thus ensuring that students are supported as effectively as possible.
- The SEN Co-ordinator is responsible for diagnostic assessments for students at regular intervals, so as to discover where they are now, how far have they progressed and decide (in collaboration with other relevant parties, teachers, parents and external agencies) how a student's learning support will proceed. This may include reference to a student's Individual Learning Plan, (ILP) including consultation with teaching staff, external agencies and parents / carers.
- The Co-ordinator will liaise with the Guidance Counsellor/Principal when applying for Reasonable Accommodations for students.
- The Co-ordinator will liaise with the Guidance Counsellor, Principal and Year Head to organise a cognitive ability test for first years and any assessments relevant to students transferring into another year group.
- The SEN co-ordinator also assists in making other teachers aware of relevant information about students with special educational needs and can advise on how these students can be supported in school.
- The duties are reviewed regularly by the Principal and may change to ensure the priority needs of the SEN department.

4. The Role of the Subject Teacher.

At Franciscan College, Gormanston 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 professional development particularly with regard to common difficulties e.g. Dyslexia & Specific Language difficulties.
- 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 students. 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 have been made available to them.

5. The Role of the Guidance Counsellor.

The guidance counsellor is a member of the SEN 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 has an important role to play in assisting students with special educational needs at the different stages of schooling and assisting them in making career decisions.
- Individualised guidance and support for students with special educational needs, and involving their parents as required, are part of the support structure that the school provides.
- The guidance counsellor ensures that counselling and guidance for students with special educational needs are included in the school guidance plan
- Subject to the overall responsibility of the Board of Management, the guidance counsellor has a special responsibility to ensure the compliance of the school with section © of The Educational Act (1998) in relation to the provision of access for students to appropriate guidance.
- The guidance counsellor in partnership with the Year Head assists with the arrangements for successful transfer of students to the post-primary school.
- The guidance counsellor will liaise with other members of the SEN team to coordinate CAT testing of students.
- The duties are reviewed regularly by the Principal and may change to ensure the priority needs of the SEN department and identified students are met.

6. The role of the Learning Support/ Resource Teacher.

The learning support/resource teacher works closely with the SEN Co-ordinator and the subject teacher of the student with special educational needs.

- 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 access the second level curriculum.
- The resource teacher may have a 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.

7. The Role of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

The SNA provides care and assistance to named students who have special educational needs. They make a valuable contribution to the schools capacity to provide inclusive education to these students. The duties of the Special Needs assistance involve tasks of a non teaching nature such as;

- Giving special assistance as necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. helping special needs students with typing, writing or other equipment.
- Assisting with feeding, clothing, toileting and general hygiene and being mindful of health and safety needs of students.
- Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom for one reason or another.
- General assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the Principal with duties of a non-teaching nature (SNA's may not act as either a substitute or temporary teacher, in no circumstances will they be left in sole charge of a class or group of children).
- Engagement with parents of special educational needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by school management.
- Other appropriate duties as may be determined by the needs of the pupils and the school. (Circulars 07/02, 24/03)

The Special Educational Needs Support Team.

The Special Educational Needs support team comprises of the following;

- ❖ Principal
- ❖ Deputy Principal
- ❖ SEN co-ordinator
- ❖ Guidance counsellor
- ❖ SNA.
- ❖ Special Duty post holder.

Through the work of the Special Educational Needs Support Team the school endeavours to create a whole school ownership in the management of Special Educational Needs.

The SEN support team play a key role in the evaluation of practices and procedures relating to Special Educational Needs. The team meet on a weekly basis.

Model of Organisation.

Transfer from Primary School.

When a student is offered a place at Franciscan College, parent/guardians are requested to provide information about their son/daughter. If their son/daughter is receiving additional support outside the main school curriculum, i.e. Resource Hours or has in the past made an application to NCSE (National Council for Special Education) for recourse hours it is required that copies of all educational and/or medical professional reports are provided.

Prior to entry to Franciscan College the Head of First Year//the Special Needs Co-ordinator contact the feeder primary schools. The school sees this liaison as an important step in ensuring proper identification of students with special educational needs and the continuity of provision between them.

IMPORTANT; A student who has been sanctioned Resource hours by the Department of Education at Primary School will not automatically have this entitlement on transfer to Secondary School. A new application is made, however applications are not always successful.

All incoming 1st year will be assessed in English, Mathematics and Irish prior to entry. All students will sit Cognitive Ability Tests during the first term. It is school policy that the results of the CAT test are not disclosed formally to the students. An analysis of the student's results will be made available to parents/guardians on request.

Information received from primary schools and parents, combined with the results of Cognitive Ability Tests and school assessment tests, help the school identify those students who may need additional support at secondary school level.

All first year teachers are briefed on matters relating to students that they are going to teach or come in contact with.

To support the transfer of all students to Franciscan College, Gormanston there is a comprehensive induction day.

Students Transferring into other Year groups.

When a student is accepted into Franciscan College, Gormanston to join a year group other than First year, information, including an academic report, is sought from their previous school. The Principal/Deputy Principal usually does this. A formal interview process is conducted. Information is passed to the Year Head and the Special Needs Co-ordinator if appropriate.

If CAT results are not available for the student transferring, the student will sit the CAT test during the first term.

Identification of Students with Special Educational Needs.

The education of students throughout the school rests in the first instance with the subject teacher. Each teacher should be aware of which students are likely to experience barriers to learning.

In many cases a student's needs are resolved through the provision of differentiated work suited to them. For those students whose progress continues to cause concern referral to the SEN team may be appropriate. Referral to the SEN team should be made on the referral form and underpinned by evidence which shows that despite receiving differentiated learning opportunities the student makes little or no progress.

Once a student has been brought to the attention of the SEN team, parents are consulted. If the SEN team, in consultation with subject department, decides that a student would benefit from further intervention they will assess the student. Parents are informed and their consent will be sought prior to any assessment taking place. The outcome of this assessment will determine what course of action is taken.

If the result of the assessment indicates that a student has not got a learning difficulty the student's needs are supported through the structures available to all students. These include;

- ✓ Mentoring/monitoring by Year Head and subject teachers.
- ✓ Differentiated work appropriate to their needs
- ✓ Review of entry levels for State Examinations
- ✓ An agreed referral to an outside agency where appropriate.

If the results of the assessment indicate that a student has a learning difficulty a decision is made as follows;

- ✓ Referral for a Formal Assessment e.g. to NEPs and/or an external professional agency. A referral is made through consultation with parents/guardians.

Arrangements for Students with Resource/Learning Support.

Resource / Learning Support:

Resource teaching can only be provided on application to and approval by the Department of Education and Science. It is only granted to students with specific levels of difficulty as outlined by DES / NCSE circulars. It is usually delivered in small group settings but may be delivered on a 1:1 basis. Should students, in conjunction with their parents choose not to access resource classes, written consent will be required from the school.

Learning support teaching is delivered predominantly in small groups to students with less severe difficulties and who are not granted resource teaching hours. Presently students with literacy scores on a standardised test below the 10th percentile will be offered learning support. Other students may be supported who do not meet this specific criteria but present with difficulties and following an assessment and review by the Principal and SEN team may be supported with appropriate intervention.

Specifically:

Resource Support;

A student is defined as having special educational needs if he/she has a learning/physical difficulty, which calls for support provision to be made for him/her. This in particular refers to;

- Students with a disability that prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities provided for the same age.
- Students, who following the correct identification procedure, have been assessed as special educational needs by an educational psychologist and are sanctioned **resource support**. At the present the Department of Education and Science have published a list of defined categories / criteria. See relevant circular as issued by DES and implemented by NCSE.

The Principal is responsible for the processing of applications for resource hours to the National Council for Special Education (N.C.S.E.).

Learning Support;

As outlined in the Education Act 1998, the Education of Persons with Disability Bill 2003 and the Education of Persons with Special Education, the school considers a student being in need of **Learning support** if he/she;

- Is recognised as being in the 10th percentile or below on a standardised test and following an assessment by the relevant professional personnel.
- Is failing to achieve in school due to specific personal circumstances.

Where a student has significant learning difficulties and yet does not qualify for N.C.S.E hours the student is given the opportunity to join an already established resource group which closest meets his/hers specific needs. The decision to provide learning support depends on results of standard tests and/or referral forms. An individual's needs may vary from time to time and so may the level of support. All students in learning support are assessed on entry and then periodically reviewed. This review is completed by the SEN team.

Procedures regarding withdrawal: Students are grouped and offered support at a time that is least disruptive to their weekly timetable. In some circumstances it may be necessary for an individual to receive one to one resource teaching but otherwise are grouped to maximise their learning and increase the level of support.

Students with Irish Exemptions.

A significant number of resource students have Irish language exemptions. Students may be withdrawn from their Irish lessons to work with the resource teacher. This may be on a 1-1 basis or in a small group.

Parents/Guardians must supply the school with the Certificate of Exemption from the Department of Education. A student may be required to remain in an Irish class until documentation is received. This decision will be taken by school management.

If a student has an exemption from Irish and parent/guardian want the student to study Irish, a copy of the exemption along with a request in writing must be submitted.

Students who withdraw from the study of Modern Foreign language.

In some circumstances it may be beneficial for students with special educational needs to be withdrawn from the modern language examination. When resources allow the SEN department will endeavour to formulate the students Resource timetable to coincide with their language timetable.

Reasonable Accommodations.

Arrangement at Junior Certificate Cycle.

Applications for reasonable accommodations are collated by the Principal/SEN team and signed off by the school. Applications are made based on guidelines produced by the Department of Education. The guidelines are available on request.

Arrangements at Leaving Certificate.

The Principal/SEN team assists parents and students in collating the requested information if they decide to submit an application for reasonable accommodations. NEPS considers and decides on this matter.

Assessment and Reporting;

Assessment data is used to;

- ✓ Highlight more able/less able students
- ✓ Profile a class group/year group
- ✓ Track student progress

The SEN department maintain files for the students with whom they work (Learning support and Resource students). Included in these files are any additional assessments that students may have taken.

At the beginning of the school year, every teacher receives a detailed register of all pupils with special educational needs. The SEN register is managed and monitored by the SEN Co-ordinator. A hard copy of this is kept in a file in the secretary's office and is updated. This register includes name of pupil, category of difficulty, results of recent testing and/or assessments, potential areas of difficulty and support being provided. Teachers are given advice and support in meeting the educational needs of pupils in the classroom where possible. Throughout the year staff is given updated information on new and existing students. Information and teaching strategies on all SEN is available in the staffroom.

Teachers record assessment marks both formal and informal in the Teacher Planner provided by the school each year.

School reports for each student are regularly sent home.

Copies of the student's reports are available on their file.

Access to Records- The school is aware that some assessment material is of a sensitive nature and it is treated confidentially and only made appropriate personnel.

Relevant information is disseminated to the appropriate staff.

LIAISING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES:

There is ongoing communication and liaison with personnel from N.E.P.S. (National Educational Psychological Services) and the S.E.N.O. (Special educational needs organiser) for the college in relation to students with special educational needs.

The Principal and the SEN team prepare data from the Department of Education and Science (DES) in support of requests for additional resources to meet the needs of the students.

The SEN team applies to the D.E.S. for language exemptions and special considerations in State examinations on behalf of individual students.

This policy is for the academic year 2015-2016 and will be reviewed periodically by the SEN team.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on **16th June 2014**