Firhouse Educate Together N.S.

**Special Education Teaching Policy 2017**

**Introduction**

Firhouse Educate Together National School is an equality based, multi-denominational, co-educational, mainstream primary school catering for children from a diverse range of social and cultural backgrounds. Our school is child centred in its approach to education and democratically run with the active participation of parents encouraged in the daily life of the school. All staff are fully committed to creating a positive, warm and comfortable atmosphere where the identity of every child is respected and supported. (Educate Together Charter)

Our aim is to fully integrate children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) into mainstream classrooms in so far as is possible. This policy operates in conjunction with other school policies including the Child Protection Policy, Enrolment, Inclusion Policy, Equality Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Relationship and Sexuality Policy, Health and Safety Policy and other curricular policies (Maths, English etc.).

**Rationale**

The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents, special needs assistants and other interested parties on the provision of effective additional teaching support for all pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties and/or a learning disability and/or special needs as well as to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004, with particular reference to ‘Special Educational Needs – A Continuum Support, 2007’, ‘Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties – A Continuum of Support (Guidelines for Teachers)’, and the ‘Special Education Teaching Allocation’ (Circular 0013/2017).The policy also recognises that the purpose of the strategy ‘Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011 - 2020 (Department of Education and Skills) “is to raise achievement in literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students including those with special educational needs.” (p.66).

**Definition of Special Needs**

In the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) the term “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... (Government of Ireland, 2004b, section 1).

Intervention with pupils will be delivered in a manner that best meets the needs identified for each child, which may be through group or individual teaching in class or by withdrawal.

**Relationship to the Ethos of the School**

We provide for the holistic development of pupils in our care, in as far as our resources permit through:

* Providing appropriate and holistic education for all pupils in the school
* Supporting pupils with special educational needs
* Developing learner autonomy
* Involving parents in supporting their children’s learning

**Principal Aim:**

The principal aim of Special Education Teaching is to optimise the teaching and learning process so as to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving school and to realise his or her full potential as a unique individual.

**Specific Objectives of Special Education Teaching:**

Through implementation of this policy we strive to:

* Facilitate pupils to participate to the best of their ability in the full curriculum for their class level.
* Promote collaboration among teachers and SNAs in the implementation of whole school approach to special education support for pupils.
* Establish early intervention programmes designed to enhance learning and to prevent / reduce difficulties in learning, such as phonological awareness, peer tutoring, daily five and power hour.
* Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning
* Enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners within their own ability.
* Involve parents in supporting their children’s learning.

**Guiding Principles**

The school recognises that effective learning programmes and the prevention of learning difficulties, as far as possible, are achieved through:

* Providing resources to support pupils with special educational needs and using these resources to facilitate the development of truly inclusive education in our school.
* Providing supports to pupils with special educational needs based on identified needs and informed by regular reviews of progress (in consultation with parents and pupils) as outlined in the Continuum of Support Guidelines.
* The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all pupils in their classroom, including pupils with special educational needs.
* Special education teaching supports will be used solely for the support of pupils with identified special educational needs, including those pupils for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL) and not to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio in mainstream classes or to allow any special education teacher sole responsibility for the delivery of any curriculum subject to any particular class.
* Pupils with the greatest levels of need should have access to the greatest level of support, and whenever possible, these pupils should be supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.
* Our school will establish and maintain a core team of teachers to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. All members should have the necessary experience and access to continuing professional development to support the diverse needs of pupils with special educational needs.
* Our whole school will be actively involved in inclusive special education teaching
* Our whole school policies will deliver equality of access and esteem to all children.
* We will prioritise the provision of intensive early intervention.
* Resources will be directed towards pupils with greatest need.
* Prevention Strategies will be engaged in all classes
* We will continue to develop and implement agreed whole school approaches to language development e.g. phonological awareness.
* We will continue to develop and implement agreed whole school approaches to the Maths programme e.g. Maths language.
* Parental involvement will continue to be a priority throughout our school.
* Formal and informal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held annually and as deemed helpful respectively.
* School newsletters, website and school Facebook Page will be used to communicate school events, news, achievements, trips etc.
* Class-based early intervention by the class teacher resulting in provision of additional support will be continued.
* Ongoing observation and assessment of pupils by Class Teacher will be continued.
* Transparent and fair selection of pupils for Special Education Teaching as set out in this policy will be adhered to.
* Previous to any pupil being referred to a Special Education Teacher the Class Teacher draws up a programme suitable to the pupil’s needs based on his/her observations.
* The principle of Early Intervention applies; therefore pupils in Junior classes are given priority in the allocation of Special Education Teaching.
* Junior Infant pupils are screened using teacher observation and the Belfield Infant Assessment Profiles (BIAPs).
* From Senior Infants upwards, all pupils are screened annually, using appropriate standardised tests. MIST, Micra / Sigma-T and Drumcondra Tests are administered by Class Teachers in collaboration with the Special Education Teachers.
* Priority for Special Education Teaching is given to those pupils who perform at or below the 10th Percentile
* In the case of pupils performing at or below the 10th percentile, the screening process is followed by a meeting between the Class Teacher, the Special Education Teacher, the Principal and the parents concerning the pupil’s performance and supplementary teaching is offered
* Parents are consulted and their consent is sought for the provision of Special Education Teaching and accompanying diagnostic assessments.
* The over-riding principle is that resources are deployed to address the identified needs of pupils.

**Early Intervention**

* Early intervention will only take place if additional support is being provided to pupils who qualify under the selection criteria in English and Maths and to pupils with special educational needs.
* The Class Teacher and Special Education Teachers will share the instruction of particular intervention programmes e.g. phonological awareness and other literacy and numeracy programmes.
* Junior Infant pupils are screened using teacher observation and where deemed useful by the Belfield Infant Assessment Profiles (BIAP).
* In Senior Infants all pupils are screened using a combination of teacher designed tests and appropriate standardised tests e.g. Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST), Drumcondra Early Numeracy Test.
* On entry to school parents will be required to sign a general consent form for their children to be withdrawn for early intervention programmes at any stage form Junior infants to Second Class inclusive.

**Identification and Selection of Children in Need of Special Education Teaching**

**Planning the allocation of special education teaching supports**

In planning the allocation of additional teaching supports, the over-riding principle is that resources are deployed to address the identified needs of pupils. Importantly, those with the highest level of need should have access to the greatest level of support. In addition to literacy and numeracy difficulties, many pupils will have specific needs in such areas as oral language, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development and application to learning.

**Action 1: Identification of pupils with special educational needs**

Review existing information on pupils’ needs, using school-based data, and any information from parents and external professionals.

Engage in additional screening and data gathering as required, using informal and formal assessment approaches (for example, teacher observations, information on social and emotional competence, standardised tests, diagnostic tests).

Identify all pupils with special educational needs in the school. Match their needs to the appropriate level on the Continuum of Support.

**Action 2: Setting targets**

Based on individual needs, set clear learning targets for each pupil at each level of the Continuum of Support.

**Action 3: Planning teaching methods and approaches**

Identify the level and type of intervention required to meet targets for each pupil on the Continuum of Support.

Select evidence-informed methodologies best suited to promoting meaningful inclusion such as differentiation, heterogeneous grouping, team-teaching and small group teaching.

**Action 4: Organising early- intervention and prevention programmes**

Based on identified needs, choose evidence-informed early-intervention/prevention programmes to address concerns. Identify time needed and staffing commitment required.

**Action 5: Organising and deploying special education teaching resources**

Cross-reference the needs of pupils at School Support and School Support Plus levels and consider common needs that can be met by grouping to ensure effective and efficient teaching and learning approaches.

Agree which teacher(s) will cater for these groups/individuals and when and where the teaching will take place. Be mindful of the requirement that pupils with the greatest level of need should receive the greatest level of support from teachers with relevant expertise.

**Action 6: Tracking, recording and reviewing progress**

Establish a tracking and recording system, to ensure that the progress of all pupils in meeting their identified targets is monitored:

* At Whole-school and Classroom Support level by all teachers
* At the School Support and School Support Plus levels by class teachers

 and special education teachers

**Classroom Support:**

The class teacher considers how to differentiate the learning programme effectively to accommodate the needs of all pupils in the class.

A classroom support plan is developed and / or adjusted over time for those pupils who do not respond appropriately to the differentiated programme.

This is informed by:

* Parental consultation
* Teacher observation records
* Teacher-designed measures /assessments
* Basic needs checklist \*
* Learning environment checklist\*
* Pupil consultation - My Thoughts About School Checklist
* Literacy and numeracy tests
* Screening tests of language skills

A Classroom Support plan runs for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.

**School Support:**

At this level a Support Plan is devised and informed by:

* Teacher observation records
* Teacher-designed measures / assessments
* Parent and pupil interviews
* Learning environment checklist
* Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy
* Formal observation of behaviour including ABC charts, frequency measures
* Functional assessment as appropriate, including screening measure for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties

A support plan at this level may detail suitable teaching approaches including team-teaching, small group or individual tuition.

A School Support Plan operates for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.

**School Support Plus:**

This level of the Continuum is informed by a detailed, systematic approach to information gathering and assessment using a broad range of formal and informal assessment tools, reports from outside professionals (as appropriate) and may include:

* Teacher observation and teacher-designed measures
* Parent and pupil interviews
* Functional assessment
* Results of standardised testing such as measures of cognitive ability; social, emotional and behavioural functioning; adaptive functioning etc.

Data generated from this process are then used to plan an appropriate intervention and can serve as a baseline against which to map progress.

A support plan at this level is likely to be more detailed and individualised, and to include longer term planning and consultation.

Children in all classes from First Class to Sixth Class will be screened annually in May for possible learning difficulties in literacy and numeracy using the Drumcondra Reading Test, Drumcondra Spelling Test and Drumcondra Maths Test respectively.

The following categories of pupils will receive supplementary teaching from the Special Education Teachers in line with the ‘Special Education Teaching Allocation’ (Circular 0013/2017) in no particular order :

* Children in Junior Infants who score below critical level(s) on the BIAP and as a result of ongoing classroom and individual assessment and teacher observations.
* Senior Infants, identified by the Class Teacher, as a result of the MIST / Drumcondra Early Numeracy Test and teacher observations.
* Pupils in First to Sixth Classes whose achievement is at or below the 10th percentile on standardised tests in literacy and/or numeracy and where possible pupils who achieve between the 10th and 20th percentile on standardised tests in literacy and/or numeracy.
* Pupils learning English as an Additional Language.
* Pupils with learning difficulties, pupils with mild social or emotional difficulties and pupils with mild co-ordination or attention control difficulties associated with identified conditions.
* Pupils who have been identified as being in the low incidence category (Appendix 1 Sp. Ed. Circular 02/05).
* Pupils who have special educational needs arising from high incidence disabilities (borderline mild general learning disability, mild general learning disability and specific learning disability).
* The Early Intervention Programme for Literacy from Junior Infants to Second Class.
* The Early Intervention Programme for Numeracy for First Class and Second Class.
* Where possible support will also be offered to pupils whose achievement is between the 20th and 30th percentile on standardised tests in literacy and numeracy.
* If possible children who have high levels of ability will have support to work on more challenging projects with a Special Education Teacher.

**Provision of Supplementary Teaching:**

* The primary work of the Special Education Teachers is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils identified above.
* Classes will be intensive in terms of frequency.
* A system of withdrawal and/or in-class support will operate in response to the needs of the pupils and the school following discussions between the Class Teacher, Special Education Teachers and Principal.
* The Special Education Teachers in consultation with the Class Teacher decide the size of groups, taking into account the individual needs of pupils and the overall needs of the school.
* One to one teaching may be provided where small group teaching has not been effective and case load permits.
* The Class Teacher and the Special Education Teacher meet to devise Support Plans in consultation with the Principal and parents; the pupils involved may also contribute to setting their own short-term targets.
* Supervision of classes will be arranged to facilitate teachers attending planning meetings with parents during school hours. In the case of Infant Classes meetings will be held as much as possible during the last hour of school day when pupils have gone home.

**Communication Strategies**

The operation of an effective communication system between all parties involved in meeting the learning needs of the child is essential.

The various strands of this system include:

* Meeting parents of Junior Infant children to explain school policies and how parents and teachers can work together for the benefit of pupils.
* Informing parents of concerns regarding progress in school.
* Outlining the school’s practice with regard to diagnostic testing and follow up procedures.
* Consultation between Class Teacher and Special Education Teacher following low score on a screening test
* Consultation between Principal and/or Special Education Teacher and/or Class Teacher and parents following a low score on a screening test, including the seeking of approval for diagnostic assessment and provision of supplementary teaching
* Ongoing communication between the Special Education Teacher and the Class Teacher
* Regular communication between the Class Teacher, Special Education Teacher and parents
* Regular SEN team meetings

**Referral to Out-of-school Agencies**

* The LST, in collaboration with the Class Teacher and Principal, co-ordinates the referral of pupils to outside agencies, e.g. Educational Psychologist.
* The Principal and/or Special Education Teacher and/or Class Teacher meet with the parents to discuss the need for the referral and to seek consent.
* The Class Teacher completes the necessary referral form in consultation with the appropriate school personnel.
* The external professional visits the school to meet with the pupil, parents, Principal, Class Teacher and the Special Education Teacher as appropriate and assessment is conducted.
* This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed.
* Where concern arises regarding the manner or speed of the follow–through post assessment, such concern is pursued by the Principal with the out-of- school agency.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

The implementation of our policy will be supported as follows:

Principal / Deputy Principal to co-ordinate Special Education Teacher and Special Needs services.

* Assisting in the implementation of a broad range of whole school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to prevent learning difficulties:
* Development of individual profiles and learning programmes for pupils who are selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with the Class Teacher and parents
* Maintaining fortnightly planning for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of learning support
* Delivering intensive early intervention programmes to pupils in Junior Classes
* Regular meetings with parents to discuss pupil’s progress
* Providing teaching in English and/or Mathematics to pupils who experience low achievement
* Contributing to the development of policy at the whole school level and at the cluster level where applicable
* Liaising with class teacher on individual pupil’s needs and progress
* Liaising with external agencies
* Maintaining a list of pupils who are receiving supplementary teaching and special educational needs
* Conducting diagnostic assessment
* Maintaining and reviewing pupil records

**Class Teacher**

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the pupils’ learning needs within his / her class. Their responsibilities include:

* Making parents aware of the concerns of the school about their child’s progress
* Outlining the schools practice with regard to diagnostic testing and follow up procedures
* Where possible attending meetings between Special Education Teacher and pupil’s parents
* Consult and co-operate with Special Education Teacher re pupil’s Support Plan
* Be alert to the possibility that some children may have a specific learning difficulty and bring it to the attention of the Special Education Teacher
* Modify class programmes to suit the needs of pupils
* Where there is a Special Needs Assistant outline their duties clearly for the instructional term

**Parent**

* Support for and participation in their child’s learning
* Support for and participation in Support Plan development
* Attendance at meetings with class teacher and/ or Special Education Teacher
* Supporting child in homework and in working towards at-home targets as agreed in the IPL
* Supporting the work of the class teacher and Special Education Teaching team in the best interests of their child’s learning

**Pupil**

It is important for the students to have an input, if possible, into the development, implementation and review of their own learning. By doing so they can:

* · become more independent as learners
* · become aware of different learning styles
* · become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses or needs
* · enjoy success and evaluate their progress
* · develop the skills and strategies that will support their engagement with

the curriculum in their own classes

**Board of Management**

* Oversee implementation and review of the Special Education Teaching policy and the provision of adequate resources, accommodation and storage.
* Resources for the provision of Special Education Teacher include a variety of textbooks, library books, ICT and ancillary materials and oral language development materials.
* A variety of testing materials are also in use which include standardised, diagnostic screening, reading attainment, phonological awareness and Maths attainment.
* Special Education Teaching resources will primarily be used by the Special Education Teaching team. The resources may be made available to class teachers following consultation with Special Education Teachers.

**Success Criteria**

The school-wide implementation of this policy will result in enhancement of pupil learning in the following ways:

* Improved standards of academic achievement with the pupil’s Support Plan
* Enabling the discontinuation of the provision of Special Education Teaching support based on positive assessment results
* Enhanced parental involvement in supporting their child’s learning needs
* Increased opportunities for effective communication between school personnel in relation to pupils’ progress.

Implementation and Review

The implementation of this policy will commence in September 2017. It will be reviewed at the end of every school year, or as circumstances may warrant.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was circulated to the school community before being ratified by the Board of Management of Firhouse Educate Together National School on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A copy of the policy is shared with teachers and is available for parents on the school website.

Ratified by Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Francis Fullen: Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Collette Dunne: Principal