

St. Mary's College Dundalk



Additional Educational Needs Policy

Ratified by the Board of Management on the 18th November 2025.

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1. Introduction

Additional Educational Needs (AEN) provision in St Mary's College is an integral part of the continuum of support within the school. The main aim, in line with the College's Mission Statement, is to help all students reach their potential within an inclusive school environment. The AEN Department emphasises the individual needs of each student in our care. We appreciate that each student learns in different ways and at different rates so a variety of teaching methods are employed across the school and within the AEN Department.

2. Definitions

Definitions relevant to this policy, as outlined in the Education Act 1998, the Education of Persons with Disability Bill 2003 and the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.

Inclusion: Inclusion is defined as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners through enabling participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and removing barriers to education through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements, to enable each learner to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her attendance at school. *National Council for Special Education (2011)*

Additional Educational Needs: 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. *Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (2004)*

In consideration of these definitions the College 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
- He/she has such a recommendation following an assessment by the relevant professional personnel,
- He/she is failing to achieve in the College due to specific personal circumstances.

The College considers a student as having Additional Educational Needs as one who has a learning or 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 the educational facilities provided for students of the same age.
- Students, who following the correct identification procedures, have been assessed as having Additional Educational Needs by an educational psychologist and are deemed to be entitled to resource support. At present the Department of Education and Skills defines this as the 2nd percentile or below with regard to Dyslexia.

In the context of this policy the term 'Additional Educational Needs' (A.E.N.) shall include students with learning support and resource needs.

3. Scope of Policy

The Additional Educational Needs (AEN) policy applies to all students with AEN including those with exceptional ability. The requirements of identified AEN students are taken into account by all involved - parents/guardians, teachers, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors, ancillary staff, etc., and across all areas of school life, e.g. class work, homework, pastoral care, study, extra-curricular, etc.

4. Legal Framework

St Mary's College sets out to provide education for all its students with reference to legislation regarding students with AEN as listed:

- The Education Act (1998) & (2004).
- The Education Welfare Act (2000).
- The Equal Status Act (2000).
- The Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill (2003).
- The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003).
- The Freedom of Education Acts (1997 and 2003).
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004).
- The General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR).
- The Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017
- DES Circular Letters, in particular Circular 0014/2017 & The Guidelines for Post Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (DES2017b).
- The guidelines published by the NCSE
- The Guideline for the Continuum of Support for Post-primary Schools (NEPS)

5. Mission Statement

St. Mary's College is a Catholic Co-educational Secondary School under the patronage of the Marist Fathers. The primary aim of this College, through its spiritual and humanistic endeavours, is to promote and develop a sense of community where those entrusted to its care can be brought to the fullness of their human potential in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel. The College, through its academic, pastoral and spiritual undertakings strives to provide for the holistic development and welfare of each of the students in its care.

St Mary's College aspires to:

- Give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children who have a disability or who have other Additional 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 College.
- Affirm that students with Additional 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 / Guardians 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 Additional Educational Needs (NCSE), National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and other agencies with regard to the education of students with Additional Educational Needs.
- Inform all members of staff of the Additional Educational Needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.
- Offer students with Additional Educational Needs a balanced and differentiated curriculum and see that they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with Additional Educational Needs. To develop a team approach involving all with an interest in the student's progress i.e. subject teachers, Year Head, Academic Monitors, Guidance team, AEN Teachers, Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), ancillary staff, school management, outside agencies, parents/guardians and students.
- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with Parents / Guardians in order to achieve appropriate support at home.

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of practice in support of students with Additional Educational Needs.

Special Educational Teaching team:

St Mary's College is allocated teaching support under the new model for allocating Special Education Teachers (DES, 2017a) to schools which allows the school to plan in advance of the school year. Accordingly, in May of each academic year, the Principal informs the Additional Educational Needs Coordinator (AENCO) of the number of hours available for the Special Education coordinator to allocate to Additional Educational teachers (AET's) for the following academic year to meet the needs of students identified as having additional educational needs (This is contingent on advance confirmation by the Department of Education and Skills of the number of hours of Special Education resources being allocated to the school for the following academic year). Subsequently, these resources are allocated to AET's based on the individual needs of students and in accordance with this policy to ensure the additional educational and learning support needs of students in the school are met. These allocations are recorded in the "School Provision Plan for students with special educational needs" for St Mary's College.

The AEN team consists of

- Additional Educational Needs co-ordinator with oversight for whole team.
- AET Co-ordinators with responsibility for planning and co-ordination of particular Year Groups.
- Additional Education Teachers (AET's) delivering learning support and monitoring progress. (Where possible, AET Co-ordinators will provide support for students within their Year Group).
- Special Needs Assistants
- Classroom teachers
- Co-operative teachers
- Guidance Counsellors
- Student Support Team
- Year Heads
- Academic Monitors
- Senior leadership team

Deployment of Special Education teaching resources

Special education teaching resources are deployed in an optimum manner in St Mary's College to improve both the learning experiences of and educational outcomes for students identified as having additional educational needs. In deploying additional education resources, the over-riding principle is that these resources are deployed to address identified needs of students whilst ensuring those with the highest level of need have access to the greatest level of support. Accordingly;

- Learning support and resource teaching is allocated to students in line with their needs whilst ensuring that those with the greatest need receive the highest level of support. This model of support is based on the students' needs and is informed by regular reviews of progress and ongoing consultation.
- The additional educational needs of students are cross-referenced so that common needs can be met through a blend of within class support, small group and individual support to ensure effective and efficient teaching and learning approaches.
- Additional educational needs supports are tailored to meet the unique needs of students, addressing social, emotional as well as literacy and numeracy needs. The supports address the specific needs of the students following consultation with the students themselves, relevant teachers, parents, professionals as necessary.

6. Additional Educational Needs (A.E.N.) Support Department 2020/21

Principal:	Mr. Alan Craven
Deputy Principals:	Ms. Pippa Brady
	Mr Donal Hegarty
	Ms. Anita White
Additional Educational Needs Team:	Mr. Oisin Quigley
	Ms. Catherine Shaw
	Ms. Charlene Mathieson
Additional Educational Needs Co-ordinator:	Ms. Pippa Brady
Guidance Counsellors:	Ms. Lynn McArdle
	Ms. Anita Morgan
	Ms. Anne Mulligan
	Mr. Stephen Martin
	Mr. Shane McDonnell

Special Needs Assistants (SNA):	Ms. Kathleen McClean,
	Ms. Cathie McCauley
	Ms. Sarah Smyth
	Ms. Margaret Comey
	Ms. Emily Cooney

7. Identification and Planning For AEN Support

The Continuum of Support

Support for All

The subject teacher considers how to differentiate the learning programme effectively to accommodate the needs of all students in the class. **A Student Support Plan** is shared on Microsoft Sharepoint by the AEN Department for identified students with particular Additional Educational Needs. In-class support may be assigned on a case by case basis whereby a co-operative teacher supports the classroom teacher in meeting the full range of needs of the students in the class.

Where students continue to present with significant difficulties, despite whole school interventions such as differentiated teaching, 'Support for Some' is initiated.

Support for Some

Support at this level can take many forms, for example, co-teaching, small group or individualised tuition.

A Student Support Plan outlines the nature of support given and timeframe for review and is recorded in a student's file in the AEN office as well as on the Microsoft AET Sharepoint. Where a student has an exemption from a language or a reduced timetable, support is given during the class periods from which he/she is exempt in so far as resources allow.

Support for a Few

At this level, subject teacher(s), parents and additional education teachers, in collaboration with outside agencies, as required, engage in a more detailed and systematic approach to information gathering and assessment. This involves using a broad range of formal and informal assessment and diagnostic tools, including teacher observation, student interview, measures of cognitive ability and social, emotional, behavioural and adaptive functioning, as appropriate. Data generated from this process may be used to make an application for SNA access. The SNA will be an integral part of the plan for these students. A Student Support File (at this level is likely

to be more detailed, individualised, and to involve longer term planning and consultation. A teacher friendly version of this support file is available as a resource on the Microsoft AET Sharepoint.

SNAs are assigned to provide appropriate care to students in their charge. They engage sensitively with AEN students to ensure that no stigma is attached. The aim is to gradually reduce the support needed so that the AEN student can gain maximum independence.

a) Curriculum Provision for Students with Additional Educational Needs

- The integration of AEN into the curriculum is based on the Continuum of Support Model. The aim is to be both flexible and responsive to the student's needs.
- The principal with the AEN Department will assess new applications for Irish Exemptions in line with the Guidelines published by the Department of Education and Skills on 28th August 2019 and circular 0053/2019. Where applicable, the student exempt from Irish will receive learning support at that time.
- In addition, reduced timetables may be facilitated in very special circumstances in consultation with all relevant parties and available resources.
- In line with the new Junior Cycle Framework, the AEN Team will support senior management in identifying students who would benefit from following some or all of the Level 2 Learning Programme (L2LP) at Junior Cycle and the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA) at senior cycle.

b) Transistion from Primary to Post Primary School

- The College holds an Open Night for prospective students in the first term of the school year. Members of the AEN Department are available in the Learning Support Room for parents/proprospective students to discuss Additional Educational Needs provision in relation to learning needs specific to their case. Parents are advised to provide information relating to the AEN's of their child in good time in order to meet the deadlines for SNA or other supports as relevant.
- Screening/assessment of all incoming 1st Years occurs prior to entry using CAT4 to identify all those at or below the 10th percentile, including those who have previously diagnosed difficulties. Possible literacy needs and/or numeracy needs are identified from verbal and quantitative standard scores.

- Parents are invited by letter to provide information relating to the Additional Educational Needs of their child prior to attending the assessment tests.
- AENCO liaises with Principal, incoming first year Year Head and guidance team before plans are made to visit Primary Schools with a view to collating any relevant information to assist in the provision of support for students with AEN.
- Where appropriate an application is then made to the NCSE through the local Special Educational Needs Officer (SENO) requesting appropriate resources to support the students identified as having a special educational need.
- Information collated from Educational passports, Educational Psychological Reports, other schools attended or other outside agency reports are consulted, if available.
- Further consultation with parent/guardian and student is sought to gain a deeper understanding of a student's needs.
- Where appropriate, the AENCO will arrange for a student to visit the school with a parents to familiarise him/herself with the building and visit frequently used areas at a time which will best suit the student's needs.
- First Year students complete a Transition to Post Primary School Induction Programme in conjunction with SPHE class facilitated by the Year Team and supported by SNA personnel and senior buddies.
- Within the first term, all First Year students will sit baseline assessments in Maths (PDST Competency Tests) and English (NGRT) which will add to the students' profile of needs.

c) AEN Planning, Monitoring and Reviewing for all Year Groups

- AEN Team record Standardised scores from Drumcondra tests (Micra T & Sigma T), CAT 4, NGRT, Maths Competency Tests and any further testing carried out by the AEN Department to inform AEN provision.
- AEN Team examines referrals from subject teachers, Academic Monitors, parents/guardians, Guidance Counsellors, relevant outside agencies, educational psychologists.
- When data gathering and analysis are complete a proposal of how best to meet the student's needs is put together and shared with relevant staff in accordance with the GDPR guidelines. In St Mary's College we use Microsoft Office 365 suite. Student Support Files and Resources are stored in a SET Sharepoint with appropriate permissions attached. Suggested strategies from educational reports are uploaded and implemented where feasible, depending on the resources available.

- The AEN timetable is formulated for identified students in accordance with the Continuum of Support. (See below)
- All teachers will monitor students' progress through observation and class tests; where concerns arise, the class teacher can liaise with the Year Head, AEN Department or the Guidance Department as appropriate.
- The AENCO and AEN Department meet on a weekly basis to record and assess progress of students their allocated year groups.
- The AEN Department liaise with Year Heads regarding academic tracking and progress in general. Relevant members of AEN Department may attend Year Team Meetings as appropriate when a student's support plan is being discussed. Information is then fed back to AEN Department Meetings.
- A member of the SNA Team attends the weekly meeting with the AEN Co-ordinators for each Year Group and AENCO.
- The AENCO, Guidance Counsellors, Chaplain, Wellbeing Co-ordinator and Attendance Officer attend the Student Support Team meeting on a weekly basis. Referral to AEN Department can be made at this meeting.
- AETs record material covered in one-to-one/group classes and monitor students' progress. Progress towards targets and strategies that have been beneficial in supporting the students' success are added to the Review Table on the Student Support File.
- The school facilitates parents/guardians wishing to discuss the needs of their child by appointment with relevant support personnel. Parents/guardians are recognised as the primary educators and as such play a pivotal role in the support and on-going monitoring of AEN students.
- AET's attend Parent Teacher Meetings.
- AEN Team use WIAT III or WRAT IV or other DES approved standardised tests to further investigate learning needs as appropriate.
- AEN Team arrange for Educational Assessments if necessary through NEPS.
- AEN Team screen for RACE applications.
- The majority of class teachers have experience of supporting the additional needs of students through AEN Rotations which facilitates co-operative teaching at pinch points in the academic year (CBA Completion, Practical component deadlines, Project deadlines and Oral/Aural practice).

Tests which may be used:

- Neale Analysis of Reading Ability - Revised
- WRAT4
- WIAT III
- DASH (Speed of handwriting assessment)
- Edinburgh Reading Test 4.
- Bangor Dyslexia Screening Test
- France Mathematical Test
- Vernon Mathematical Test
- nferNelson Mathematics 12 Test
- The AENCO will formally communicate with the teaching staff at a staff meeting once an academic year if necessary.
- The AENCO for the future First Year group works closely with the Guidance Counsellor(s) during the profiling and assessment of incoming students.

8. Intervention Programmes

The following are some specific support programmes that are used to support AEN students:

- *SNIP*
- *Vocabulary Enrichment Programme (introduced in First Year 2019/20)*
- *FRIENDS for Life (Youth)*
- *Crucial Skills Programme.*
- *Talkabout social skills programme and Talkabout Teen: all years as appropriate.*
- *Learning for Life in school Programme (Seniors)*
- *School Completion Continuation Programme.*

This list is not exhaustive and changes from year to year.

9. Further Supports:

- Access to a Visiting Teacher for those students with hearing / visual impairment is facilitated as necessary.
- SNA Support is provided in the classroom. Students with medical/sensory needs are supervised and supported in the Group Room.

- Some students with organisational needs that overwhelms their capacity to manage a school locker, have access to the Group Room for this purpose. This is reviewed on a needs basis.
- AEN team have two hours planning and one hour meeting sessions as part of the AEN allocation hours. (Subject to adjustment depending on the particular planning needs of student groups).
- Extra-curricular activities are open to all and encourage inclusion.
- Differentiation occurs within subjects to encourage participation of students of all levels of ability in class.
- Varied methodologies are encouraged and supported to include all students e.g. using concrete materials, group work/ paired work, differentiation of class/homework and AFL strategies.
- Additional learning extension/stretched learning opportunities are provided for students at the top end of the spectrum.
- Confidential reports etc. are filed securely in the AEN Department and online with appropriately secure permissions.
- Student Support Files are drawn up for students who have been identified as Stage 3 (Support for a Few). These are reviewed on an on-going basis and complement monitoring by the Year-Teams.
- Communications with outside agencies such as NEPS or TUSLA occurs as the need arises.
- Applications are made for RACE based on the criteria set out by SEC.
- After-school study is provided for all students including students with AEN's.
- First Year Homework club is offered to students who have been identified by the Year Team and AEN Department as needing some support with managing homework.
- SNA's facilitate homework club for those students identified as having AEN and who need differentiated homework support. SNA's provide this support from their Croke Park Hours.

10. Communication

Between school and home

- Parent /Teacher meetings are held annually. AEN teachers and the corresponding AEN co-ordinator for that year group are available to meet with parents.
- The procedure for parents/guardians making contact with the school is to contact the College office for an appointment.
- Assessment reports are sent out in October, Christmas, February/March and Summer.
- AET's communicate with parents/guardians by email and by phone, or in person when necessary.
- School journals are available for communication.

Between School and Outside Agencies

Communication between the AEN Department and outside agencies only happens with the consent of the parents/ guardians.

11.Student Records

The AEN Department keeps information on individual students on file in a secure place.

- The AEN Department shares information on individual students around learning, emotional behaviour, student strengths and challenges. This information is shared in accordance with the GDPR guidelines.
- A record is kept on file of each of the following for the duration of a student's time in school:
 - Student's assessment details
 - Support details received by students accessing additional educational resources.
 - Any professional reports as furnished by parents/guardians or by outside agencies as consented by parents/guardians.
 - Applications for RACE, Irish Exemptions, SNA reports, reports/letters furnished by parents/guardians and any other relevant material.
 - AET's will keep records of content covered in one-to one tuition and small group in their teaching files.
 - Review details are added to Student Support Files by AET's and classroom teachers where appropriate.
 - Referral information is made through 'Compass' and added to the Student's Support File in the 'Log of Actions'.
- These records are kept in 'archives' for seven years after a student leaves.
- Minutes of meetings within the AEN department are kept on file and on the AEN Department Sharepoint.

12.Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the Board of Management is:

- To ensure that all students Additional Educational Needs are identified and assessed.
- To ensure that the College has a Additional Educational Needs policy team in place, to monitor the implementation of that policy and to ensure its evaluation.

- To ensure that a balanced and differentiated curriculum is provided in the College to ensure in as far as is practical that students with Additional Educational Needs leave the College 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 Additional Educational Needs.
- To promote the development of positive partnerships with Parents / Guardians and other relevant agencies / personnel.
- To ensure that Parents / Guardians are informed of their child's Additional Educational Needs and how these needs are being met.
- To ensure that Parents / Guardians 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 Additional Educational Policy forms part of the School Plan.
- To develop a whole College approach to literacy and numeracy under Section 14 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.

The Role of the Principal

- On behalf of the Board of Management the Principal has responsibility for all aspects of the day-to-day management of policy and provision for students with Additional 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). In consultation with the AENCO and Resource teachers ensure that an Student Support Plan is prepared for relevant students.
- To inform the Board of Management of issues, which are relevant to Additional Educational Needs.
- In consultation with the Additional Educational Needs Department and other relevant personnel to liaise with the Department of Education and Skills 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 promote a whole College approach to special educational need, 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 / Guardians of students with Additional Educational Needs.
- To ensure that procedures exist for consultation with feeder primary schools with regard to the enrolment of new students with Additional Educational Needs.

The Role of the Additional Educational Needs Co-ordinator (AENCO)

- The AENCO works closely with the Additional Educational Needs Team to identify, plan and support students with additional education needs.
- The AENCO liaises with Parents / Guardians of new First Year students and the Principals of feeder Primary schools with regard to incoming students with additional needs.
- The AENCO may visit the student in the Primary school and meet the Resource teacher.
- The AENCO makes a presentation to the staff at the beginning of the academic year about incoming students with additional needs.
- The AENCO liaises with the staff with regard to the additional educational needs of the students and provides them with information on how to deal with them.
- The AENCO works with the AEN Team to timetable for resource teaching hours and curricular adjustments for some students.
- The AENCO works with the AEN Team to make arrangements for the Reasonable Accommodations for State Examinations for those students who may require them.
- The AENCO liaises with NEPS and psychologists under the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments.
- The AENCO liaises with the Special Educational Needs Organiser at N.C.S.E.
- The AENCO liaises with the HSE, Speech and Language Therapists and Social Workers.
- The AENCO works with the AEN Team to assess students about whom subject teachers have concerns when normal interventions have not worked.
- The AENCO liaises with the College's Special Needs Assistants (S.N.A.).
- The AENCO is a point of contact for Parents / Guardians who have concerns about the educational needs of their children.

The Role of the Additional Educational Teacher (Formerly known as Learning Support Teacher)

- The AET works closely with students who have Additional Educational Needs.

- The AET can, when appropriate, provide advice to subject teachers as to the teaching methodologies best suited to that student.
- The AET provides direct teaching to a student with Additional Educational Needs either to reinforce the teaching that takes place in the classroom or to improve upon the core literacy / numeracy skills necessary to successfully access the second level curriculum.
- When appropriate, the AET will initiate and participate in meetings involving Parents / Teachers and / or outside agencies.
- The AET is involved in the identification of students with AEN.
- The AET is involved in the planning process regarding students with Additional Educational Needs. This involves timetabling, curriculum adjustment, etc.
- The AET organises, runs and oversees Social Skills programmes for students who have been identified as being in need of social development.

The Role & duties of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

- The Special Needs Assistant provides care assistance to named students who have Additional Educational Needs. They make an invaluable contribution to the College's capacity to provide inclusive education to these students.
- The AET, SNA, Parents / Guardians and, where appropriate, outside agencies work collaboratively in devising an appropriate plan for a student with Additional Educational Needs. The SNA is 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.
- Assisting / escorting students on College trips.
- Giving special assistance as necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. helping special needs students with typing, writing or other use of equipment, applying eye-drops, etc.
- Assisting with clothing, feeding, toileting, general hygiene and being mindful of the health and safety needs of the student.
- Assisting the student with particular concentration difficulties in the classroom.
- Assisting with examinations (if appropriate).
- Assisting the teacher in the supervision of students during assembly, recreation and in movement from one classroom to another.
- Accompanying an individual student who may be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom.

- Engagement with parents of special needs student in both formal and informal structures, as required and directed by College management.
- Other appropriate duties as may be determined by the needs of the students and the College. 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 College business and their work, as strictly confidential.
- Providing assistance in Homework Club for students needing differentiated homework support.

The Role of the Subject Teacher

At St. Mary's College, the academic progress of students throughout the College rests in the first instance with the subject teacher. In order to ensure that as a College we meet the needs of all, our students' subject teachers are encouraged to:

- Be aware of the College's policy and procedures (as outlined in this document) for dealing with students with Additional Educational Needs.
- Familiarise themselves with the Individual Profiles of students distributed at the start of each academic year and available in the AEN folder on the College share drive.
- Seek advice from the AENCO regarding students with Additional Educational Needs.
- Incorporate the needs of students identified with additional educational needs into their learning, teaching and assessment planning.
- Use referral Template to pass on any concerns about the progress of a student to the AEN team.
- Take responsibility for their own continuous professional development particularly with regard to common difficulties e.g. Dyslexia and Specific Learning Difficulties.
- Develop an attitude of ownership to the education of students in their classes with Additional Educational Needs.

The Role of the Guidance Counsellor

- The Guidance Counsellor is a member of the Student Support Services and works with other members of the College community in facilitating the provision of education for students with Additional Educational Needs and their inclusion in the College. The Guidance Counsellor(s)

works closely with the Principal, AENCO and Resource teacher to identify students requiring further attention.

- The Guidance Counsellor(s), AENCO teacher and Additional Educational Needs Team work together to help the successful transition of all students to St. Mary's College and to gather information about students, including those with Additional Educational Needs, before their transfer from primary school.
- The Guidance Counsellor(s) visits primary schools in order to meet with 6th class teachers on each incoming student. A note is taken of any student with Additional Educational Needs and further information and reports are sought from Parents / Guardians if they have not forwarded them already.
- The Guidance Counsellor(s) have an important role in assisting all students, including those with Additional Educational Needs at the different stages of schooling. To facilitate this students and Parents / Guardians are welcome to make appointments with the Guidance Counsellor. This is particularly encouraged for students progressing from Junior Cycle to Senior Cycle. Students in First Year meet with a Guidance Counsellor during the year. Students in Third Year are offered appointments with the Guidance Counsellor in order to discuss subject choice for Senior Cycle and the option of taking Transition Year and/or LCA. Students in Senior Cycle are offered appointments with the Guidance Counsellor to support them in making career decisions. Each class group at Senior Level have one Career Guidance class per week. LCVP is offered to Senior students and is the responsibility of the guidance Counsellor and the Co-ordinator of Programmes. It is acknowledged that students with Additional Educational Needs may require greater support at formal transfer points while in our College. Guidance Counsellor(s) are particularly aware of these students.
- An **Options Information Evening** is held for Parents / Guardians of students progressing to TY, LCA or Fifth Year. The Guidance Counsellors attend and make a presentation. There is also a Careers and **C.A.O. Information Evening** for Parents / Guardians of Sixth Years organised by the Guidance Counsellors.
- Prior to entry to St. Mary's College, First Year students are tested using standardised tests, the CAT 4. The Guidance Counsellors work closely with the Principal, Deputy Principal, AENCO and AEN Team in the organisation of these tests.
- At key stages throughout the students' schooling the Guidance Counsellor(s) are responsible for co-coordinating a number of assessments including the DATs tests and the Probe Interest Inventory is used with Third Years to help with subject choice. The Qualifax Careers Portal is also used with senior students.

- When appropriate, the Guidance Counsellor(s) is available to staff who may want to seek advice / relevant information regarding students with Additional Educational Needs and how they can best be supported in College

The Role of the Parents / Guardians

- To provide the College with any information that may be relevant, including assessments by Educational Psychologist, Speech Therapist, and Occupational Therapist etc.
- To participate in their child's efforts to meet their learning targets.
- To give consent for the College to make a request for their child to be assessed by outside agencies, if necessary.
- To sign and return copies of any home / College liaison arrangements.
- To act on recommendations made in professional reports, for example Educational Psychology Reports, Occupational Therapy Reports, etc.
- To supervise the student at home when doing homework and revision for exams.
- To inform the AENCO about any problems that may occur between meetings.
- To attend review meetings and parent teacher meetings to discuss their child's progress.
- To ensure that their child is fully equipped for school.
- Reinforce SPHE / RSE programmes.

The Role of the Student

- Where appropriate, the student will be asked to discuss learning targets and select areas for learning support.
- Where appropriate, the student may be invited to attend meetings with Parents / Guardians and outside agencies.
- Takes ownership of the targets agreed and cooperate within the learning support group.
- Work to the best of their ability.
- Tell the AET / AENCO of any issue that might be affecting their ability to concentrate and focus in class.
- Co-operate with the College's Code of Behaviour and discipline, RSE and SPHE programmes.
- Ensure that all subject homework is clearly recorded and completed on time.

13. Students transferring into other Year Groups

When a student is accepted into St. Mary's College to join a year group other than First Year, information is sought from their previous school. The Principal / Deputy Principal facilitates this. This information is passed to the Year Head and the AENCO and AEN Team if appropriate.

Signed: Manuela Ó Conluain

Chairperson, Board of Management.

Date: 14th November 2025.

14. Appendices

Appendix 1: Definitions of AEN Categories (from NCSE)

General learning Difficulty / GLD

Borderline mild general learning disability.

This category consists of children who have been assessed by a psychologist as having a borderline mild general learning disability (DES Circular Special Education 08/02).

Mild General Learning Disability. This category consists of pupils who have been assessed by a psychologist as having a mild general learning disability (DES Circular Special Education 08/02).

Mild GLD: IQ score of between 50 and 70 on a standardised test of intelligence.

Moderate GLD: Moderate general learning disability - IQ score of between 35 and 49 on a standardised test of intelligence.

This category includes pupils who have been assessed by a psychologist as having a moderate general learning disability (DES Circular Special Education 02/05).

Severe/Profound GLD: Severe and profound general learning disability -IQ score of less than 35 on a standardised test of intelligence.

This category includes pupils who have been assessed by a psychologist as having a severe or profound general learning disability. In addition, such pupils may have physical disabilities (DES Circular Special Education 02/05).

A formal diagnosis of a general learning disability also requires that a student is experiencing a significant impairment in the area of adaptive functioning or general life skills.

Specific learning disabilities include:

Specific learning disability / SLD: This category includes children who have been assessed by a psychologist as: being of average intellectual ability or higher having a degree of learning disability specific to basic skills in reading, writing or mathematics which places them at or below the 2nd percentile on suitable, standardised, norm-referenced tests.*

Children who do not meet the above criteria and, who in the opinion of the psychologist, have a specific learning disability are more properly the responsibility of the Learning Support teacher and/or the class teacher (Circular Sp Ed 08/02).

Dyslexia: is a difficulty in learning to read. This may mean that the child finds it hard to learn to read words or to understand what is written.

Dyscalculia :is a difficulty with numbers. This may mean that the child finds it hard to understand how numbers work or learn to count or add, subtract, multiply and divide.

Dysgraphia: is a difficulty with writing/spelling. This means that the child finds it difficult to write legibly and may have problems with spelling. They may find it hard to order their thoughts when writing a story or essay.

Physical disability

Pupils have permanent or protracted disabilities arising from such conditions as: dyspraxia, congenital deformities, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, brittle bones or severe accidental injury.

Because of the impairment of their physical function they require special additional intervention and support if they are to have available to them a level and quality of education appropriate to their needs and abilities. Many require the use of a wheelchair, mobility or seating aid, or other technological support. They may suffer from a lack of muscular control and co-ordination and may have difficulties in communication, particularly in oral articulation, as for example severe dyspraxia.

Pupils with a physical disability who have learning difficulties arising from the disability may need resource teaching where there are consequent significant learning difficulties.

Others may need assistive technology only (DES Circular Special Education 02/05).

Hearing impairment

This includes pupils who have a hearing disability that is so serious as to impair significantly their capacity to hear and understand human speech. This prevents the child from participating fully in classroom interaction and from benefiting adequately from school instruction. The great majority of these children have been prescribed hearing aids and are availing of the services of a Visiting Teacher.

This category is not intended to include pupils with mild hearing loss (DES Circular Special Education 02/05).

Note: Hearing loss is measured in decibels and can be mild, moderate, severe or profound (Special Education Review Committee (SERC) Report, 1993).

Levels of hearing loss as defined in the SERC report are illustrated in the following table:

Minimum audible intensity Level of impairment

20-30 decibels Mildly Hard of Hearing

30-60 decibels Moderately hard of hearing

60-89 decibels Severely hard of hearing

90 decibels or over Profoundly Deaf

Blind/visual impairment

Pupils have a visual disability which is so serious as to impair significantly their capacity to see, thus interfering with their capacity to perceive visually presented materials, such as pictures, diagrams, and the written word. Some will have been diagnosed as suffering from conditions such as congenital blindness, cataracts, albinism and retinitis pigmentosa. Most require the use of low-vision

aids and are availing of the services of a Visiting Teacher (This category is not intended to include those pupils whose visual difficulties are satisfactorily corrected by the wearing of spectacles and/or contact lenses) (DES Circular Special Education 02/05).

Emotional disturbance and/or behavioural problems

Pupils are being treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist for such conditions as neurosis, childhood psychosis, hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and conduct disorders that significantly impair their socialisation and/or learning in school. (This category is not intended to include pupils whose conduct or behavioural difficulties can be dealt with in accordance with agreed procedures on discipline).

Some pupils in this category may need resource teaching support. Care support from a special needs assistant may be required where a pupil's behaviour is a danger to himself or others or where it seriously interferes with the learning opportunities of other pupils.

In certain circumstances, some pupils may require both supports (DES Circular Special Education 02/05).

Severe emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems (severe EBD).

A child with severe EBD must be in the care of a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist for a severe clinical disorder. A very small number of pupils would be expected to fall within this category.

Autism/autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)

This category includes pupils who have been assessed and classified by a psychiatrist or psychologist as having autism or autistic spectrum disorder according to DSM-IV, DSM-V or ICD-10 criteria.

In the interest of the pupil with an ASD and in order that the needs of the pupil are adequately addressed, it is important, where feasible, that for a definitive assessment of ASD, a multi-disciplinary assessment team should be involved. The need for a multi-disciplinary assessment is also in keeping with NEPS policy (DES Circular Special Education 02/05).

Pupils with Additional Educational Needs arising from an assessed syndrome

The level of additional support to be provided for pupils who preAENt with a particular syndrome, for example Down syndrome, William's syndrome and Tourette's syndrome, will be determined following consideration of psychological or other specialist reports which describe the nature and degree of the pupils' Special Educational Needs (DES Circular Special Education 02/05).

Specific speech and language disorder (SSLD):

This category includes:

- pupils assessed by a psychologist on a standardised test of intelligence that places non-verbal or performance ability within the average range or above
- pupils assessed by a speech therapist on a standardised test of language development that places performances in one or more of the main areas of speech and language development at two standard deviations or more below the mean, or at a generally equivalent level

- pupils whose difficulties are not attributable to hearing impairment; where the pupil is affected to some degree by hearing impairment, the hearing threshold for the speech-related frequencies should be 40Db
- pupils whose emotional and behavioural disorders or a physical disability are not considered to be primary causes of the difficulty experienced

This category is not intended to include pupils with speech and language delays and difficulties. Two assessments, a psychological assessment and a speech and language assessment are necessary in this case (DES Circular Special Education 02/05).

Multiple disabilities

Pupils assessed with multiple disabilities meet the criteria for two or more of the low incidence disabilities described above (DES Circular Special Education 02/05) – taken from the NCSE information booklet.

Addendum to Admissions Policy

Eligibility criteria for enrolment in a special class for autism

A student may be accepted for admission into the Special Class for Autistic Students when all of the following criteria are met: The student has a professional report (s) outlining

- A Diagnosis of Autism: DSM IV/V or ICD 10/11 (psychologist, psychiatrist, multi-disciplinary report)
- AND
- A demonstration of the understanding of complexity of the child's overall level of need/s evidenced in the professional reports
- AND
- Given the severity or complexity of the child's support needs, a clear professional recommendation as to what educational placement type would be most appropriate to best meet the child's needs, along with the rationale for same.
- AND
- A letter from the NCSE confirming that the child is known to them and that the child has the required diagnosis and recommendation for a special class for autism.

Enrolment Policy for the Special Class for Autistic Students

The total capacity for the class is restricted to six students as determined by the NCSE and the DEY. All applications for the Special Class for Autistic Students will be considered within the context of St Mary's College Admissions Policy.

Application Process:

- An application should be made through the general St Mary's College Application Form and made in line with the College Admissions Policy.
- A separate application form should be submitted for a place in the Special Class for Autistic Students.
- Supporting documentation will be submitted to the College by a date specified in advance. If the documentation is not submitted, the offer of a place may be withdrawn.
- Applications for enrolment will be considered for eligibility by the Senior Leadership Team.
- Prior to acceptance, parents/guardians will meet with a member of the SLT and Co-ordinator for the Special Class for Autistic students to ensure that the needs of their child can be met within the resources available to the school.

Selection criteria in the event of oversubscription:

1. Current students enrolled in the College.
2. Applicants whose parent/guardian is an employee or member of the Board of Management of St Mary's College.
3. Siblings preference, for applicants who have brothers or sisters who are registered students of the College on the admission closure date.
4. Siblings preference for applicants who have brothers or sisters who have attended the College.
5. Applicants whose parent/guardian is a past pupil of the College. A past student is defined as any student who completed at least three years in St. Mary's College.

6. The first child in the family to attend post-primary school.
7. All other applicants.