

## Inclusion Policy for Students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN\*)

\*AEN, formerly SEN, is used to designate both additional learning needs and additional care needs.

### General

To develop our students' academic, intellectual, practical, manual, and sporting abilities and skills; a capacity to deal with analytical and logical processes; to encourage a delight in spiritual, creative, and artistic activities.

To foster respect, a sensitivity to the needs of others embracing diversity and to develop a sense of community in Newpark, family and in the broader social context. We are committed to creating an enjoyable environment in which the positive strengths of every person in this community are nurtured to the full.

We endeavour to:

- develop self-esteem and self-confidence in our students
- provide a supportive and caring community
- enable our students to achieve their chosen goals
- equip students with a balanced outlook regarding life, work, and leisure

Newpark Comprehensive School welcomes and provides an inclusive environment for persons with Additional Educational Needs (AEN). As per the 'Person's with Special Needs Act, 2004', the school recognises that the 'education of people with such needs shall wherever possible take place in an inclusive environment'. Newpark seeks to include all students' participation in school life in so far as is reasonably practicable, to access and benefit from its education and activities to the fullest extent possible.

Newpark seeks to minimise barriers to learning and participation for all students by acknowledging and celebrating the differences between students and by actively implementing support to reduce these barriers whenever practicable. Students are encouraged to reach their full potential in a supportive and stimulating environment and prepare to participate meaningfully and as independently as possible in the community on completion of their post-primary education.

### Ethos

Newpark has a Christian tradition, reflecting its origins within the Protestant tradition, and is under the patronage of the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin. Newpark has a specific obligation to the Protestant community of south Dublin/north Wicklow, and this is reflected in its special recognition of the National Schools under Protestant management in the catchment area and by the priority given to those enrolling from the Protestant community.

Newpark also considers itself a pluralist community; it embraces inclusion in terms of social, cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. This is reflected in its special recognition of National Schools managed under the auspices of Educate Together in the same catchment area. These two special recognitions are at the core of the school admissions policy.

Newpark is a co-educational comprehensive school. The school offers a broadly-based curriculum, geared to meet the diverse range of academic, vocational, social, and spiritual needs of its pupils. It offers a balance between

formal learning in an extensive programme of prescribed and optional subjects, and the encouragement of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities.

This principle of inclusion is embedded in the school's ethos and is particularly relevant in policies relating to admission, SPHE, Anti Bullying and Behaviour.

For the purpose of this policy, 'additional 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". The school's policy operates under the legal framework of the following legislation.

The Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act, 2004

The Equal Status Act, 2000 and Equality Act, 2004

The Freedom of Information Acts, 1997-2003

The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

The Data Protection Acts, 1988-2003

The Education Act, 1998

## Personnel with designated roles

### **Board of Management:**

Responsibility for overseeing the development, implementation and review of school policies and services in relation to the inclusion of students with additional educational needs.

### **Principal:**

Overall responsibility for ensuring that the additional educational needs of students are met. In this regard, the principal will work in close co-operation with the Deputy Principal, the AEN coordination team and the Student Support team.

### **Deputy Principal:**

Oversees the work of the AEN Coordination team and the Special Needs Assistants.

### **AEN Coordination team:**

Includes Additional Care Needs Co-ordinator, Junior & Senior Cycle Co-ordinator(s) & Programmes Co-ordinator

*Each member of the team has a designated role in the overall co-ordination of the department and reports to the Deputy Principal as issues arise.*

### **Student Support Team:**

Guidance Counsellors, representative from AEN coordination team, School Nurses, Chaplain and Deputy Principals.

*The Student Support Team meets once a week and provides a link between guidance, nurses, chaplains and the AEN coordination team.*

## Aims and Principles of the AEN Department

- Provide an inclusive environment that allows the AEN student to avail of an appropriate education in line with their peers.
- Provide an inclusive classroom environment with differentiated teaching and support.
- Provide literacy and numeracy support.
- Provide programmes to support social and communication skills.
- Ensure that people with AEN leave school with the skills required to participate and live independent lives after leaving school.
- Encourage students who are currently out of school back into education by providing a transition programme aimed at reintegration in the educational system.
- To work collaboratively with parents/guardians in supporting students to achieve their goals, both short term and long term.

### **Categories of Students currently in receipt of support:**

Newpark seeks to meet the needs of all students who are enrolled in the school and to operate a flexible and adaptable support system that caters for individual needs. The school includes students presenting with:

- General & Specific Learning Disabilities
- Physical & Sensory Disabilities
- Autistic Spectrum Disorders
- Assessed Syndromes

## Resources/Supports available to Students:

Additional resources are allocated to schools by the NCSE to facilitate the inclusion of students with additional educational needs and learning difficulties. They include:

- Support Teachers
- Special Needs Assistants
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder Classes (2)

Newpark operates the continuum of support as advised by National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). Students are profiled prior to entry and applications are made for support whenever the school is made aware of additional needs. The Student Support team meet weekly to address students' needs as they arise within the school. Students with the greatest level of need receive the greatest level of support.

### **Support Teacher**

Works with students either on a one-to-one basis or group basis to address an identified short-term need, i.e., help with reading or maths.

### **Support Teacher for students with higher level of need**

Works with an individual or group who have specific learning or behavioural difficulties, i.e., SLD, GLD, and ADHD, visually impaired and have been allocated hours by the NCSE. This position involves not just class work but also looking out for the student's wellbeing within the classroom.

## **Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)**

SNAs are assigned to address additional care needs that left unaddressed would be a barrier to inclusion. Each student assigned an SNA will either have shared or full-time access depending on the level of need. All students assigned a SNA will have a specific care plan with a specified role for the SNA. The role of the SNA, whilst being mindful of health and safety, is to support students' participation in all activities of the school and to ensure that, whenever possible, their additional care needs do not prevent inclusion. SNAs support programmes aimed at developing students' independence and basic life skills, in and outside the classroom.

## **Autistic Spectrum Disorder Special Classes**

Newpark seeks to cater for students on the autistic spectrum first and foremost in the mainstream class, with support from the mainstream teacher. Additional support teaching can be given in the classroom or extra support from a SNA when there are additional care needs present.

For some however, a higher, more intensive level of support is needed, particularly for students who find attending school extremely challenging. Placement in the above classes is considered when inclusion is not being achieved through the usual supports. Students may apply to enrol in the ASD class once they have secured a place in the school.

## **Teaching and learning in the inclusive school:**

### **Classroom Settings:**

- All teachers involved in the education of students with additional educational needs are expected to adopt a variety of teaching methods and strategies e.g., co-operative teaching, co-operative learning, active learning, heterogeneous grouping, direct instruction, to maximise the educational, personal and social outcome for all students including those with additional educational needs. Teachers are mindful that such students tend to learn best in a teaching and learning environment that is characterised by structure and organisation.
- Placement in mainstream mixed-ability classes is the agreed practice for classes, except for Irish and Maths, as students progress through the school.
- Mainstream teachers are made aware by the support teachers of the students with additional educational needs, and endeavour to engage in differentiated teaching within the classroom.
- Students who, even with a differentiated teaching programme, cannot access the curriculum meaningfully may be supported via in class support from a support teacher or through team teaching.
- Students with additional care needs that are a barrier to effective learning and inclusion will be supported by SNAs in the classroom.

### **Role of the Subject Teacher:**

- Assist in identifying and referring students who have learning difficulties to the student support team.
- To facilitate access to the curriculum for students with learning difficulties through differentiated teaching methods.
- To be aware of students with additional educational needs and to read the information provided on the green sheets and on the VSware documents.
- To communicate with support teachers regarding the progress of students with additional educational needs.

This policy was reviewed in the 2019/2020 academic year and will be reviewed again as required going forward, in line with changing information, guidelines, legislation and/or feedback from school stakeholders.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management, Newpark Comprehensive School at its meeting on 11 December 2019.