



## **SALESIAN COLLEGE CELBRIDGE SPECIAL NEEDS POLICY**

### **Contents:**

- **Salesian Ethos**
- **Overall Vision**
- **An Inclusive Learning Environment**
- **Aims & Effectiveness of this Policy**
- **Enrolment of Children with Special Educational Needs**
- **Parental Involvement**
- **Transition of Students from Primary to Salesian College**
- **The Work of the Resource Department and Ongoing Intervention and Support**
- **Special Class for Students on the Autistic Scale**
- **Exceptionally Able Students**
- **Individual Education Plans**
- **Outside Agencies**
- **Irish Exemptions**
- **Curricular Modification**
- **Access**
- **Senior Students**
- **Certification and Examination**

## **Salesian Ethos**

Don Bosco, the founder of the Salesian, and his co-workers strove to create an environment and a way of educating that would bring out the best in young people, especially those most estranged from the educational process, and to meet the social needs of their times. This legacy has become known as the Preventive System and it grew out of the experience of the Oratory, his first educational centre for the young street people of Turin. The Oratory was to be a home that welcomed, a parish that evangelised, a school that prepared for life, and a playground where friends could meet and enjoy themselves. At the heart of all that went on at the Oratory was the development of a positive and respectful relationship between educator and young person based on the three Salesian educational principles of reasonableness, religion and loving-kindness.

## **Overall Vision**

In its discussion paper on Special Educational needs and curricular issues, the NCCA (1999) state that a precise definition of special educational needs is difficult. They note how some experts believe that all students, can at some time in their lives, have some form of special educational need. Such need may range from a physical disability to exceptional or gifted ability in particular area.

However, the general understanding of students who have special educational needs is that they encounter barriers to learning. In Salesian College, Celbridge, we recognise that all students have common needs, which include a sense of belonging, being respected as an individual and being challenged as a learner. Our experience does show that some students, however, may have particular individual needs that arise from characteristics that are different from all others.

The *Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act* (EPSEN) defines special educational needs 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 (2004, No. 1).

The report on the *Special Education Review Committee* (SERC, 1993) defines areas of special educational needs under four broad headings, which embrace a wide range of special educational needs and include:

- General learning disabilities
- Emotional and Behavioural disturbance
- Language and communication difficulties and disorders
- Physical and sensory disabilities

It further describes special education as “ any educational provision which is designed to cater for pupils with special educational needs, and is additional to or different from the provision which is generally made in ordinary classes for pupils of the same age” (ibid, p.18).

## **An Inclusive Learning Environment**

The Board of Management, Staff, parents/guardians and students of Salesian college, Celbridge working in partnership are committed to the creation of an inclusive, supportive learning environment for all pupils where differences between individuals are accommodated and celebrated. In line with the Department of Education and Skills’s post-primary guidelines for the *Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs* (2007), the College understands that inclusion in education “relates not only to students with special educational needs, but also to a welcome for and an acceptance within the school of all students who have learning difficulties – for example those who are members of the Traveller community, those living in areas of social or economic deprivation, and those whose first language may not be English or Irish” (p.39).

In accordance with the *Education Act* (1998), Salesian College strives to “ensure that the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs are identified and provided for”. We believe that inclusion can have a favourable impact on students with, as well as students without, special educational needs. By adopting such an approach, students are encouraged to accept and value individual difference and to bring this attitude with them into the wider society.

Each child has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation, irrespective of gender, race, ethnic background, family status, religion, sexual orientation, aptitude, marital status, age (Equal Status Act, 2000). The school expects a high standard of behaviour as detailed in the Code of Behaviour, its Anti-bullying Policy and its Teacher’s Handbook, and strives to promote positive approaches to achieve this.

At Salesian College, a student “with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or the degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with:

- a) The best interest of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under this Act, or
- b) The effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated” (EPSEN, 2004, No.2)

### **Aims & Effectiveness of this Policy**

In adherence with the guidelines of the Department of Education and Skills’s *Guidelines for the Inclusion of Students with special Education Needs* (2007, p.17) at post-primary level, we acknowledge that the broad aims of education for pupils with special educational needs reflect those relevant to all students and include:

- Enabling the student to live a full life and to realise his or her full potential as an unique individual through access to an appropriate broad and balanced curriculum
- Enabling the student to function as independently as possible in society through the provision of such educational supports as an necessary to realise that potential
- Enabling the student to continue learning in adult life

Salesian College is a voluntary secondary school and as such its financial and teaching resources are provided through a combination of Department of Education and Skills grants, fund-raising and voluntary contributions. School policy is implemented with due regard to the resources available and in line with the requirement of the Education Act to “make reasonable provision and accommodation for students with a disability or other special educational need...” (1998, 15.2.g).

At Salesian College the provision of support for those with educational needs is supported, facilitated and coordinated through the School’s Learning Resource Department, presently located in four prefabs at the heart of the school site. This arrangement, we believe, allows the school to make the best and most creative use of the resources available to it in the area of special needs provision. A dedicated team of six teachers and five special needs assistants form the core teaching staff within the Resource Department. This is supported by many other teachers who provide classes in a variety of subjects supporting students with special needs. Literacy and numeracy are central to the work of the Resource Department but a variety of other subjects add vibrancy to individualised educational programmes. Cooking, Music, Art and PE plus regular social training outings are all part of the programmes within the centre.

The Resource Department at Salesian College aims to:

- Offer educational support to students ranging from the ‘total immersion’ of a special class of six individuals for students with autism, to those who require short term learning support.

- Provide a continuum of educational support to all students of the College who require either resource teaching or learning support.
- Respond to the individual educational needs of students and to do so in an inclusive and integrated way.
- Support the teaching process within the mainstream school by supporting students and informing the teaching of students with special educational needs.
- Integrate the students with autism with other mainstream students where it is educationally appropriate to do so whilst providing them with individualised educational programmes
- Remain faithful to the educational spirit of Don Bosco who was open to the educational needs of his day and showed a willingness to respond to these in an innovative and realistic manner
- Act a model and a resource for the ongoing development of educational services in the field of Special Needs

We believe that the effectiveness of this policy relies on:

- Whole school planning and policies that strive to remain faithful to best practice and the Salesian ethos
- Effective communication between all participants involved
- The adoption of a team approach involving teachers, students, parents, management and relevant outside agencies
- A planned transition programme from primary to post primary school aimed at identifying and supporting students with special education needs
- Ongoing review and evaluation of the strategies and resources available to special needs education

### **Enrolment of Children with Special Educational Needs**

Salesian College, Celbridge is committed to the full implementation of education legislation, the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the equality Status Act 2000 and the Education for persons with special Education Needs Act 2004. Salesian College is a mixed ability school and supports the principles of inclusiveness and equality of access and participation for all students.

Salesian College, Celbridge, welcomes students with special needs and will use the resources, both financial and personnel, provided by the Department of Education and Skills to make reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities or special educational needs up to a nominal cost so that these students are free to participate in the life in the school in so far as is reasonably practicable.

While recognising and fully supporting parent's rights to have a school of their choice for their children, the College's ability to accept students with particular needs is dependent on the supply of resources, suitable to the needs of the individual student, being supplied by the Department of Education and Skills.

The College welcomes applications from students with special educational needs unless the nature and degree of those needs is such that to enrol the student concerned would be inconsistent with both the best interests of the student concerned and the effective provision of education for the other students with whom the student concerned is to be educated.

The Board of Management must be made aware of any special needs as early as possible, so that these needs can be assessed and addressed where possible.

Parents/Guardians are requested to outline details of a child's special educational needs on the School Registration Form.

The Board of Management, having gathered all relevant information and professional documentation, assesses how the needs of these students can be met.

Contact will be made with the National Council for Special Educational Needs regarding special need resources to which the student may be entitled.

The Principal may request a meeting with the parents/guardians of the student to discuss applications and the student's needs

The parents/guardians of the student may request a meeting with the Principal to discuss the student's educational or other needs.

**N.B. It may take some time for the Department of Education and Skills to process such applications. Parents/guardians are strongly advised to inform the College as early as possible and discuss the particular situation well in advance of making an application to the school.**

As soon as is practicable, but not later than 21 days, after a parent/guardian has provided all relevant information, the Board of Management shall make a decision in respect of the application concerned and inform the parents/guardians in writing in writing thereof (Education Welfare Act, Section 9(3)).

The school has a two special classes for students on the Autistic Spectrum. Each class has a maximum of six students. Enrolment to this class shall be done in consultation with the School Management, Parents, Resource Department Personnel and, where appropriate, with other outside agencies. Enrolment to this class is in accordance with the school's admission policy.

### **Parental Involvement**

Salesian College, Celbridge recognises the role of parents as the primary educators of their children. Therefore, we welcome their full involvement in their son's education. The Resource department will discuss with the parent their son's special educational needs and consult with them in a real and meaningful way as to how these special educational needs are met by the school.

Parents are consulted and invited to participate in the making of all decisions of a significant nature concerning their son's education. Parental involvement may range from initial contact discussing their son's special educational needs, to direct involvement in the design and implementation of an Individual Education Plan for their son. Contact with parents/guardians of students with special education needs is on-going through-out the school year and the time of the student in the school. Parents/guardians are welcomed visitors, by agreement, to the Resource Department.

### **Transition of Students from Primary to Salesian College**

The School organises on an annual basis an information session for potential students and their parents/guardians. During this session the Learning Resource Department and members of its full time staff are available to meet with parents and inform them of the services and procedures available for students with special educational needs. Staff are available by appointment for follow up discussions and visits if required.

In the school's registration form parents/ guardians are asked to provide the school with information relevant to the education needs of their son. The information sought seeks a brief outline of the specific learning difficulty, existing support being provided in primary school, relevant agency support in place and subject exemptions.

A member of the Resource Department visits the Primary School of the incoming students to identify those students with special education needs and to discuss with their teachers the precise nature of their needs. By agreement with the local primary schools standard test results are made available to the Resource department and are used by school management to ensure, as far as is possible, that classes in Salesians are of mixed ability. Contact will also be made with the local Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) when it is appropriate.

The Resource department administers standardised tests to all in-coming first year students to confirm the identification of students with special education needs and to identify other students who may require additional educational support.

The Resource department takes responsibility, in consultation with parents/guardians and school management, for applying to the National Council for Special Education for the teaching and other resources appropriate to the needs of the individual students.

The Resource department, with due regard to the confidential and sensitive nature of the information, aim to provide relevant details to staff members dealing with any student with special educational needs. Resource personnel also take responsibility for providing relevant teaching staff with an audit of students who attend the Resource Department for resource teaching or learning support. This audit will list the general nature of the educational need, the particular programme a student is following and the number of classes that a student attends in the Resource Department. A member of the resource team will liaise with class tutors in order to provide additional support for students with special educational needs and facilitate more regular contact with parents/guardians than would normally be possible.

### **The Work of the Resource Department and Ongoing Intervention and Support**

In consultation with the student, their parent/guardian and subject teachers the Resource department will design and implement a programme of educational support, monitor the progress of students with special educational needs and, when necessary, make changes in the programme. The resource department will aim to support the student with special educational needs in all area of the curriculum, as well as, providing targeted teaching in the areas of literacy and numeracy. The Resource Department uses a variety of educational settings, one to one teaching, small group and larger group setting wherever appropriate to the needs of the individual student.

Resource personnel work in close collaboration with the Year head, form tutors and subject teachers. They also work closely with the school's Guidance department to monitor the progression of students through the school. Special attention is given to students who show signs of regular non-attendance, difficulties with classwork and homework, social and discipline difficulties, and poor exam results. As needs arise, individual students in consultation with their parent/guardian are offered access to the supports available within the department. Parents/guardians may ask for their son to be considered for learning support and intervention.

In the selection of students for supplementary teaching, priority will be given to those who are performing at or below the tenth percentile on standardised tests of literacy and mathematics. Some intervention may be on a short term and focused basis. Resource staff will inform the student and his parent/guardian of the planned duration of the intervention and when it is felt that progress is sufficient to allow the student to continue in the mainstream school without such intervention.

Students not in a position to follow the full school curriculum because of serious behavioural issues may be provided with a modified programme breaking up the school day into manageable portions, meeting their particular needs and allowing mainstream teaching to continue. This is subject to resources and the feasibility of organizing such a programme. Such an arrangement may be put in place following consultation with the Yearhead, Principal, Deputy Principal and the Board of Management. These individualised programmes strive to ensure success at the

state examination level providing the students with an experience of achievement and a foundation for a successful future outside school.

Counselling may be provided within the department reflecting the schools core value of providing a holistic service to the most behaviourally challenged students. Only by working with the students who are behaviourally challenging, in an atmosphere of unconditional respect can we hope to heal the brokenness which prevents them from being able to access the full school curriculum. The creation of an environment conducive to learning for all our special needs students is the central and on-going challenge to those working within the Resource Department.

The Resource department, in consultation with the school management, takes responsibility for the organisation and implementation of learning support in the mainstream school through team teaching and monitors the use and effectiveness of these teaching resources. The 'teaching team' will typically be made up of the mainstream teacher and either the resource teacher or the learning-support teacher. The members of the teaching team share responsibility for the planning and provision of instruction to the class. The resource teacher and learning support teacher usually pays particular attention to students with special educational needs or those with low achievement and endeavours to ensure that these students experience success in their learning programmes.

The Resource Department and the College follow the curricular programmes as prescribed by the Department of Education and Skills, which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with Paragraphs 9 and 30 of the Education Act (1998).

### **Special Class for Students on the Autistic Scale**

The Resource department, in consultation with the school management, takes responsibility for the special class for students on the Autistic spectrum without intellectual impairment. Enrolment to this special class is in accordance with the school's admission policy (see above).

This class reflects the inclusive ethos of Salesian college and wherever possible the students in this special class are integrated with other students within the Resource Department and where appropriate within the mainstream school. Individual Education Plans are provided for all members of the special class for students on the autistic spectrum and these individual plans will be reviewed on a regular basis.

The creation of a natural learning environment rather than isolating these students in a "stand alone" unit aims to normalise their educational experience. The school will endeavor to facilitate access to multi-disciplinary teams of other professionals, Speech and Language, and Occupational therapy where these supports are available. The students with Autism have greatly enhanced the life within the school and are living testimony to our belief that equality stems from the recognition of and provision for difference, not for sameness.

### **Exceptionally Able Students**

The NCCA Guidelines for *Exceptionally Able Students* (2007) uses this term to describe students "who require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for the general cohort of students" (2007, p.7). An exceptionally able student is one who has the capacity for or demonstrates high levels of performance in an academic area or within a domain specific ability in a non-academic area. Eyre (1997) observed that the greatest obstacle to successful provision for able students was inappropriate school and pupil attitudes. Salesian College also recognises that able students can be found among young people who have a disability or among children identified as having emotional and behavioural difficulties (Griffin and Shevlin, 2007).

Salesian College seeks to meet the challenges of exceptionally able students by seeking to:

SCC Special Needs Policy 16-06-2016

- maintain an ethos where it is acceptable to be bright
- support teachers in developing extension activities as part of a differentiated curriculum
- encourage all students to be independent learners
- recognise achievement
- be aware of the effects of ethnicity, bilingualism, gender, religion, and social; circumstances on learning and high achievement
- provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs
- always provide work at an appropriate level

### **Individual Education Plans**

Those students with assessed special educational needs may require an Individual Educational Plan to target their particular educational needs. The plan will be drawn up in line with the relevant subsections of EPSEN 2004. The Resource Department will, in consultation with the other educational partners, parents, pupil, school management, subject teachers and other outside agencies, take responsibility for the design, implementation and review of the individual education plan on an annual basis. The review will be carried out in line with EPSEN Subsection 11 as statutorily enacted.

“The plan is only a draft plan until parents have been consulted” (NCSE Guidelines on the Individual Education Planning Process, 2006, p.54) and as such parents and guardians are asked by the school to formalize the plan by signing it. The school recognises the right of a parent to make appeals in relation to their son’s education plan in line with the statutory enactment of EPSEN Subsection 12.

A copy of the plan is made available to parent/guardian while a further copy will be held in the Resource Department where it is available for updating and adjustment. A copy of the plan is accessible on request from all the educational partners involved in the particular individual educational plan.

Where a pupil with an existing Individual Education Plan is transferring from one school to another, this will be carried out in accordance with the statutory enactment of EPSEN, Sections 8 & 9.

### **Outside Agencies**

The Resource Department will liaise with the teaching staff, other schools and any outside agencies providing support to students with special education needs. Visiting teachers for the Travellers, National Educational Psychologists, Special Educational Needs Advisors, Social Workers and members of the local Child Guidance Clinic are partners with whom the Department liaises in order to provide a full service to students with special education needs.

An application will be made to the Department of Education and Skills, in line with the enactment of the EPSEN 2004 and Circular PPT 01/05, for additional resources both human (resource teaching hours or special needs assistants) and physical (ramps, computers, etc) for pupils who have been appropriately assessed and whom met the relevant criteria for Special Needs Education as defined by Circular 08/02. (See also Education Act 1998, Subsection 7 and Schools Admission Policy).

If a pupil has not been identified as having a special education need until after enrolment, the permission of parents/guardians will be sought to have the pupil assessed by the appropriate professionals.

### **Irish Exemptions**

Students who have undergone psycho-educational assessments may be exempted from the study of Irish in accordance with department regulations. The Resource Department will provide resource teaching to these students during Irish classes in order to target educational deficits and provide additional support in other areas of the curriculum.

### **Curricular Modification**

Exemptions from French/German are considered on an individual basis in consultation with parents/guardians, class teachers, learning support teacher, guidance counsellor and the school management.

Other curricular modifications are considered for individual students in exceptional circumstances. Consultation between all relevant partners is deemed essential when making such decisions. No exemption from any subject is automatic or a student entitlement.

The timetabled periods which become available due to such curricular modifications may be used, if possible, to implement individual resource interventions and learning support.

### **Access**

Every effort is being made on the part of the school management to ensure the school site offers a high degree of access for pupils with physical disabilities.

### **Senior Students**

At Senior Cycle the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) is intended to meet the needs of those students who are not adequately catered for by other Leaving Certificate programmes or who choose not to opt for such programmes. While the LCA programme has been running in Salesian College for a number of years, its availability each September is dependent on the number of suitable applicants that year.

Students who have availed of learning support or resource teaching hours during the junior cycle may feel that the LCA offers them the most appropriate learning environment. This is, however, just one of the options open to pupils who also have opportunity to apply for a place in Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Vocation Programme and the established Leaving Certificate Programme.

Additional literacy/numeracy interventions may be provided to senior students where deemed appropriate and within available resources.

Study skills programmes are offered to all senior pupils through career classes and through individual support on request.

### **Certification and Examination**

Students with special education needs are prepared for the State Examinations in accordance with their abilities and all students are assisted to reach their full potential in the state examinations. The Resource Department will either support the teaching of the mainstream teacher or be fully responsible for delivering the full syllabus and preparing the pupil for state examinations.

The Resource Department will take responsibility for applying for Reasonable Accommodation in the public examinations for students with special educational needs where it is appropriate to do so and to prepare the students for the use of whatever accommodation has been approved. The Resource Department in consultation with the school management will coordinate the State examinations for those students with special education needs.

Any senior student, for whom an application for Reasonable Accommodation is made, is assessed by a NEPS psychologist prior to the allocation of such accommodation.

## **Review**

This policy was reviewed during the academic year 2015-2016 and the changes and amendments ratified by the Board of Management in June 2016 (16-06-2016). This policy will be reviewed based on the needs within the school and on legislative changes.