



CBS PRIMARY TRALEE

Where everybody is a somebody

Special Education Policy

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Special Education Policy 2026

(Updated for Alignment with Indicators of Effective Practice (2024))

1. Introduction

At Scoil Mhuire na mBráithre, CBS Primary Tralee, we are committed to fostering an inclusive learning environment, in line with our ERST ethos, where all students, including those with special educational needs (SEN), are supported to reach their full potential. Special education teachers and classroom teachers adopt a collaborative approach to addressing the educational needs of children through team teaching, in-class support, and withdrawal in groups and/or individually, depending on the children's needs.

This policy was updated in 2026 to further aligned with the Indicators of Effective Practice for Primary Schools (2024). It reflects the principles and directives of:

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Learning-Support Guidelines (2000)
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004

- Department of Education Circulars, including 13/17, 02/05, and 0064/2024
- The Continuum of Support Framework and the school's commitment to inclusive, evidence-based practice.
- DEIS Framework Circular 0034/2023
- LAOS Document (2022).

2. Aims of Special Education

- To develop a positive attitude towards school
- To enable students with SEN and/or learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in language acquisition, literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.
- To develop positive self-esteem, resilience, and a love of learning in all students.
- To foster a whole-school culture of inclusion where students are empowered to express their learning needs and preferences.
- To optimise teaching and learning processes so that students with SEN can access a broad and balanced curriculum.
- To ensure that all staff share responsibility for supporting students with SEN.

3. Objectives

- To support students with SEN (Special Educational Needs) in language acquisition, literacy, numeracy, social, emotional, behavioural, and physical development through the implementation of the NEPS Continuum of Support, directing resources to the greatest need.
- To establish early intervention programmes that enhance learning and reduce difficulties.
- To provide supplementary teaching and additional support in English and/or Mathematics.
- To encourage differentiation in all classrooms.
- To promote structured collaboration among teachers in implementing whole-school policies and reviewing SEN provision.
- To consider children's diverse learning needs, backgrounds, interests, and experiences, and to provide a positive supportive environment where they can learn at their own pace and without fear of failure.

- To foster an inclusive environment that enables students to participate as fully as possible in the curriculum for their class level.
- To involve students in setting learning goals and monitoring their own progress, promoting independence and self-regulation.
- To use assessment data and teacher observations to inform planning, monitor progress, and review interventions.
- To assist parents in supporting their children through regular communication, consultation in planning, and active involvement in their child's learning journey.
- To ensure all staff engage in ongoing professional development related to inclusive education and SEN.

4. Principles

- Effective whole-school policies that promote inclusion and shared responsibility
- Active parental involvement and partnership
- Provision of early intervention and prevention strategies
- Direction of resources towards students with the greatest need, informed by data and evidence
- Recognition of student voice and agency in shaping learning experiences
- Collaborative planning, implementation, and review of SEN supports
- Commitment to continuous professional development for all staff

5. Staff Roles and Responsibilities

The role of supporting children's learning is a collaborative responsibility shared by the Board of Management, Principal, Special Education Coordinators, teaching staff, SNAs, parents, and students themselves. This collaborative approach ensures that planning, implementation, and review of special education provision are inclusive, responsive, and effective.

5.1 Role of the Board of Management

The Board of Management will:

- Oversee the development, implementation, and regular review of the Special Education Policy, ensuring alignment with national guidelines and the Indicators of Effective Practice.

- Ensure that adequate classroom accommodation, teaching resources, and assistive technologies are available to support inclusive education.
- Allocate funding for the purchase of appropriate teaching materials and resources to support students with SEN.
- Provide secure storage for student records, ensuring confidentiality and compliance with data protection regulations.

5.2 Role of the Principal / Special Education Coordinators

The Principal and/or Special Education Coordinators will:

- Lead the development and implementation of inclusive whole-school policies for special education, in collaboration with staff and SNAs.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of SEN provision using data and feedback from students, parents, and staff.
- Maintain and regularly update a register of students receiving support, ensuring resources are directed to those with the greatest need.
- Oversee the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify students requiring additional support.
- Facilitate referrals to external agencies (e.g., NEPS, HSE, CAMHS) and coordinate follow-up actions.
- Promote professional development opportunities for staff in areas such as inclusive pedagogy, differentiation, and SEN strategies.
- Ensure that inclusive practices are embedded across all classrooms and that staff are supported in implementing the Continuum of Support.

5.3 Role of the Class Teacher

Class teachers have first-line responsibility for the education of all students in their class. In line with Circular 13/17 and the Learning-Support Guidelines (2000), they will:

- Implement the NEPS Continuum of Support and develop Classroom Support Plans for students with emerging needs.
- Identify students with learning difficulties through observation, assessment, and collaboration with the SET/EAL/EBD teachers.

- Engage in regular, meaningful communication with parents to gather relevant information and share progress through journals/ Teams/ phone calls, meetings, and formal parent-teacher conferences.
- Be familiar with all reports and support plans for students in their class.
- Collaborate with the SET/EAL/EBD teachers to develop, implement, and review Support Plans, ensuring students retain access to areas of strength and enjoyment.
- In relation to the EBD (Emotional Behavioural Difficulties) class list, best practice suggests that the teacher who works most closely with the student, and who therefore has the most comprehensive understanding of the child's needs, should take the lead in developing the plan. However, the process should remain collaborative and involve the EBD class teacher, the SET and the main stream class teacher.
- Attend relevant professional development and contribute to whole-school inclusive practices.
- Complete documentation and liaise with professionals regarding assessments. Ensure all assessment documentation is copied and filed as per GDPR requirements.
- Be informed of internal and external support structures (e.g., CAMHS, NEPS, HSE, CDNT, Tusla).
- Work closely with SNAs to ensure coordinated support for students with SEN.

5.4 Role of the Special Education Teacher (SET)

SETs provide targeted support to students with low-incidence SEN and/or learning difficulties at the School Support and School Support Plus levels. Their role includes:

- Implementing the NEPS Continuum of Support
- Contribute to the development of the school's Special Education Policy.
- Assist with implementing whole-school procedures for selecting students for supplementary teaching.
- Collaborating with class teachers to deliver early intervention and supplementary teaching through various models (e.g., in-class support, team teaching, withdrawal).
- Supporting students under the 10th percentile in literacy and numeracy, as outlined in Circular 13/17 and 0064/2024.
- Administering and interpreting formal and informal assessments and maintaining records.

- Developing Support Plans in consultation with Class/EAL/EBD teachers, parents, SNAs, and external professionals.
- In relation to the EBD (Emotional Behavioural Difficulties) class list, best practice suggests that the teacher who works most closely with the student, and who therefore has the most comprehensive understanding of the child's needs, should take the lead in developing the plan. However, the process should remain collaborative and involve the EBD teacher, the SET and the main stream class teacher.
- Implementing recommendations from external agencies and liaising with them as needed.
- Using a wide range of teaching methodologies and resources to meet diverse learning needs.
- Meeting with parents to set targets and discuss strategies for home support.
- Advising on the purchase and use of learning resources to support inclusive education across the school.

5.5 Role of the English as an Additional Language Teacher (EAL)

Our school is committed to providing appropriate provision of teaching and learning for pupils for whom English is an additional language. We include and welcome all children and their families, particularly those for whom English is not their first language, in a manner that openly respects and celebrates diversity. Their role includes:

- Contribute to the development of the school's Special Education Policy.
- Carry out assessment of every newly arrived child, for whom English is not their first or home language using the PSAK Primary School Assessment Kit.
- Provide targeted support to students who qualify for support, for whom English is not their first or home language. (Children qualify for EAL support if they have not reached level B1.3 in Speaking, Listening, Reading or Writing test in PSAK, or they have received less than 3 years EAL support)
- Collaborate with class teachers and SETs to deliver the school's EAL thematic language programme, which is derived from the Dept of Education's Up and Away programme and the Primary Language Curriculum.
- Develop EAL Support Plans in consultation with class teachers, parents, SNAs, and external professionals.
- Deliver the EAL programme through various models (e.g., in-class support, team teaching, withdrawal).

- Integrate children, as appropriate, to mainstream learning activities of the school, and work with all resources available to us in school e.g. HSLT, DP, EAL, EBD and SET team to support and respond to children's learning and behavioural needs.
- Promote home school links, including digital, to communicate and engage with parents of EAL children to facilitate best learning opportunities for their children.
- Administer and maintain PSAK once per year and carry out teacher designed vocabulary and comprehension tests termly.
- Advise Class/SET/EBD teachers of children's PSAK levels and what their proficiency level means using table from Up and Away Programme.
- Use a wide range of teaching methodologies and resources to meet diverse learning needs.
- Meet with parents to discuss strategies for home support.

5.6 Role of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

SNAs play a vital role in supporting the care needs and safety of students with additional needs. Their role includes:

- Assisting teachers to provide supervision.
- Administration of medicine. (Signed Care Plan)
- Supporting students with personal care needs (feeding, toileting, hygiene, mobility).
- Assisting with non-nursing care related to medical conditions.
- Providing supervision and emotional support for extreme behavioural related care needs, including withdrawal when necessary.
- Enabling curriculum access for students with physical, sensory, or significant social-emotional needs.
- Preparing and tidying learning spaces to support inclusive practices.
- Assistance with severe communication difficulties, arising from visual, hearing and/or socio-emotional difficulties.
- Collaborating in the development and implementation of Personal Student Plans.
- Assisting teachers and/or Principal in maintaining a journal/log or care monitoring system.

- Assistance with enabling students to access therapy sessions or psycho-educational programmes.
- Assisting with planning and participation in school activities, including out-of-school events.
- Working as part of a collaborative team, contributing to student wellbeing and inclusion.
- Moving and lifting, operation of hoists and equipment.

SNAs are encouraged to engage in ongoing professional development to enhance their understanding of inclusive education and care strategies.

5.7 Role of Parents

Parents are essential partners in their child's education and play a central role in supporting learning and wellbeing.

If supplementary teaching is offered, and parents do not wish to avail of it, they must state this in writing and the letter will be stored in the child's GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) file. Their decision is logged in the Log of Actions on Aladdin.

Responsibilities include:

- Sharing relevant reports and information that may impact their child's learning. (Green admission's registration form)
- Supporting homework routines and reinforcing learning strategies at home.
- Ensuring that their child has necessary materials and is physically and emotionally ready for school.
- Cooperating with school-based and external professionals involved in their child's support.
- Participating in the development and review of Support Plans and attending scheduled meetings.
- Communicating any concerns or changes between review meetings.
- Keeping contact details up to date and informing the school of any special arrangements.
- Providing written consent for supplementary teaching and ensuring decisions are logged appropriately. (box ticked on the Green Admission Registration form.

Parents are encouraged to actively engage in their child's learning journey and contribute to a positive, inclusive school culture.

5.8 Role of Students

Students receiving supplementary teaching are supported to become active agentic participants in their learning. Their voice and agency are central to effective practice.

Students should be encouraged to:

- Understand and engage with their learning targets, contributing to their development where appropriate.
- Help select texts and materials that reflect their interests and support their goals.
- Develop ownership of learning strategies taught during support sessions and learn to apply these independently.
- Contribute to the evaluation of their progress by participating in appropriate assessment activities, including self-assessment.

This approach fosters independence, motivation, and self-awareness, helping students build confidence and resilience in their learning.

6. Early Intervention & Prevention

Early intervention and prevention are central to our school's inclusive approach to supporting students with diverse learning needs.

6.1 Screening & Assessment Procedures

To ensure a data-informed approach to planning and intervention:

- Green Admission Registration forms are used to gather relevant background information on each student.
- Class Teachers and Special Education Teachers (SETs) collaboratively administer, score, and record results of screening and standardised assessments annually (May/June).
- **Senior Infants:**
 - *Drumcondra Early Numeracy Test*
 - *MIST (Middle Infant Screening Test)* for early literacy

- **EAL students:** Assessed using the *PSAK (Primary School Assessment Kit)*
- **1st–6th Classes:**
 - *Micra-T* (literacy) in May.
 - *Sigma-T* (numeracy) in May.
 - End-of-year class-based assessments
- Assessment data (STEN scores, percentiles, etc.) are recorded on Aladdin, the school's data management system.
- Woodcock Johnson 4 Cognitive Ability Test, is used as an alternative standardised test for some students.
- CAT 4 is administered as a screener in September of 3rd class for all 3rd class students.
- Additional screening may be conducted by SETs as needed, based on teacher observations or student progress.
- These assessment tests are stored in the Deputy Principals office and listed on SET Microsoft Teams.

6.2 Identification & Monitoring

Procedures for the prevention or early intervention of learning difficulties are a cornerstone of supporting learning.

- Assessment results are used to identify students requiring additional support under the Continuum of Support Framework (Classroom Support, School Support, School Support Plus).
- Students are monitored continuously through formal and informal assessments and teacher observations to facilitate the identification of learning needs.
- Teachers use diagnostic tools to pinpoint specific areas of difficulty e.g. Running Records (error analysis), CAT 4, Woodcock Johnson 4 and Dyslexia screeners

6.3 Whole-School Strategies

To ensure consistency and progression across all class levels:

- Collaborative planning between Class Teachers and SETs to align teaching approaches.
- Agreed methodologies for teaching English and Mathematics across the school to ensure progression and continuity from class to class.

- Emphasis on phonological awareness and rhyming skills before formal reading instruction.
- Structured schemes for phonics, spelling, oral language, comprehension, and writing.
- Use common language and agreed strategies for teaching mathematics that align with the new Primary Mathematics Curriculum, ensuring consistency across classes, supporting diverse learner needs through differentiation, and making maths meaningful through playful and real-life contexts.
- Provision of additional support in language, literacy and numeracy for students identified through screening.
- Continuous monitoring and assessing of the language, literacy, and numeracy skills of students in the infant classes, in a formal and informal way, to facilitate early identification of learning difficulties.
- Use of the Continuum of Support to track supports for students throughout the school from classroom support to school support to school support plus.

6.4 Intervention Programmes

These programmes are delivered through a mix of in-class support, station teaching, small group work, and withdrawal, depending on student needs. These lists are a sample and non-exhaustive and are in alignment with Effective Practice:

- Inclusive, whole-class interventions that support differentiated instruction.
- Grounded in collaborative planning and evidence based data-informed decision-making (with the exception of Junior and Senior Infants Early Intervention Station Teaching).
- Promote student engagement, voice, and agency through active participation and targeted support.
- Are embedded within the school's Continuum of Support Framework, ensuring consistency and responsiveness to student needs.

Junior Infants to 6th Class

- Unconditional positive regard for all students
- Student Support Team
- Home School Liaison Teacher

- School Completion programme
- Emotional Support Rooms
- Therapeutic Play Intervention
- Sensory Room/ Climbing wall
- Therapy dogs
- EBD Special Classes
- Regulation stations and activities
- Aistear
- Literacy & Numeracy Station Teaching
- Math's-focused intervention based on Ready Set Go
- Differentiated groups (Maths, Literacy, Language, Social, Emotional and Regulation Support)
- Reading Recovery
- Buddy Reading with senior classes
- Guided Reading
- Early Intervention Station Teaching in Junior and Senior Infants
- Bí Cineálta Wellbeing Framework
- DEAR Time (Drop Everything and Read)
- Outdoor Classroom/ Garden
- *Staff members trained in Restorative Practice, Friends for Life* (social-emotional programme) and *Incredible Years* (behavioural support programme)

7. The Staged Approach

The Continuum of Support Framework guides our staged approach to identifying and supporting students with additional learning needs. This process ensures that interventions are timely, targeted, and inclusive, with collaboration among teachers, parents, and external professionals.

7.1 Selection Criteria for Support

Students are identified for additional support based on a combination of teacher observation, assessment data, and ongoing monitoring. Criteria include:

- Teacher observation and professional judgement.
- Standardised test results (e.g. students performing below the 10th percentile in literacy or numeracy)
- Students previously receiving supplementary teaching who continue to experience difficulties.
- Students identified through the Continuum of Support process, including social, emotional, and behavioural assessments.
- Students who have had an external assessment, and received a diagnosis, and have been identified as having a low incidence need.
- Students with significant SEN requiring highly differentiated learning programmes.
- Students with English as an Additional Language (EAL) who require targeted language support.
- Students presenting with Behaviours of Concern.

7.2 Stage 1 – Classroom Support

Classroom Support is led by the Class Teacher and involves differentiated teaching within the mainstream setting.

Please note: In the case of students who present with social, emotional or behavioural concerns, it is recognised that more urgent immediate action may be needed. These students may not have reports from outside agencies e.g. NEPS or CAHMS. In these cases, the student may move directly to stage 3, School Support Plus.

Key actions:

1. Concerns may be raised by the teacher or parent regarding a student's development.
2. The teacher completes a Classroom Support Checklist and gathers relevant data on the student. (available in SET Teams in Special Education Policy and Resources folder – Continuum of support resources)

3. A Classroom Support Plan is developed if necessary, outlining targeted strategies and supports. This plan is kept in the student's assessment folder.
4. Progress is monitored and reviewed regularly, with communication to parents.
5. If concerns persist, the teacher consults with the SET to consider progression to Stage 2, School Support.

This stage emphasises inclusive teaching, early intervention, and collaborative problem-solving.

7.3 Stage 2 – School Support

School Support involves more targeted intervention, coordinated by the SET in collaboration with the Class Teacher.

Key actions:

1. The Class Teacher and SET review the student's progress and share evidence based relevant documentation.
2. In collaboration with parents, the student may undergo further diagnostic screening to inform planning.
3. A School Support Plan is developed collaboratively, including parent, class teacher, student voice and SET.
4. Progress is reviewed termly (or more frequently if needed).
5. The SET maintains a file with assessments, plans, and progress notes.
6. If concerns remain, the team may consider progression to Stage 3, School Support Plus.

This stage emphasises data-informed planning, collaborative teaching, and structured review cycles.

Stage 3 – School Support Plus

School Support Plus is for students with complex or persistent needs requiring highly individualised support and possible (but not always) external involvement.

Key actions:

1. Where necessary, the school will involve relevant external agencies and the child will be referred, with parental consent, for a detailed psychological assessment and/or to a multi-disciplinary team e.g. HSE, CAMHS, KIDS. Advice should be provided by the multi-disciplinary team to assist with differentiating the curriculum, with resources and classroom organisation.
2. A School Support Plus Plan is developed in consultation with specialists where appropriate, identifying additional resources (e.g., assistive technology, sensory supports).
3. Parents, students and staff are fully involved throughout the process.
4. Formal reviews are held **twice yearly** (February and June), with ongoing monitoring.
5. Students with significant pre identified needs can start Stage 3 support upon school entry, with the Class Teacher retaining primary responsibility in collaboration with the SET.

This stage may involve multi-disciplinary teams, staff collaboration, resource allocation and individualised planning .

8. Assessment

Assessment is a cornerstone of effective teaching and learning at CBS Primary Tralee. Our approach is evidence based and in alignment with effective practice. It is comprehensive, inclusive, and continuous, ensuring that students' academic and non-academic progress is monitored and supported through both formal and informal practices.

8.1 Teacher Observation & Informal Assessment

- Teachers use ongoing observation, teacher-designed tests, projects, and homework to assess student progress.
- Records of both formal and informal assessments are maintained and shared with parents during Parent-Teacher meetings and in end-of-year reports.
- Non-academic progress is reviewed under headings such as:

- Self-esteem and self-regulation
- School attendance
- Attitude to learning and school
- General behaviour

8.2 Standardised Testing

Standardised tests are administered annually to monitor literacy and numeracy development:

Test	Class Level
Drumcondra Early Numeracy	Senior Infants
MIST (Middle Infant Screening)	Senior Infants
Micra-T (Literacy)	1st–6th Classes
Sigma-T (Numeracy)	1st–6th Classes

Results are recorded on Aladdin, the school's data management system, and used to inform planning and support allocation of resources.

8.3 Class-Based Assessments

End-of-year assessments are carried out by Class Teachers and SETs to provide a holistic view of student progress. These **may** include:

- Maths end-of-year test (with follow-up for students performing poorly on Sigma-T)
- Reading Tests (Spar, Woodcock Johnson 4 etc) (June)
- Creative writing samples (June) (ordinarily with all children in June.)
- Reading Running Records (January & June)
- Spelling tests (Drumcondra, Woodcock Johnson 4 etc)

These assessments inform:

- Support Plan reviews
- School reports

- Groupings and planning for the following academic year

8.4 Diagnostic Assessment

When concerns arise, diagnostic testing is conducted collaboratively by the Class Teacher and SET:

- Consultation with parents, previous teachers and psychologist
- Student Voice (e.g. "My thoughts about School") to explore attitudes and learning styles
- Diagnostic tests in literacy, language, numeracy, and other areas

All diagnostic tools are listed in the Assessment Resource Folder (SET Microsoft Teams) and stored in the Deputy Principal's Office.

If a psychological assessment is warranted:

- Parental consent is obtained
- The Principal or Special Education Coordinator facilitates the referral

8.5 Recording & Documentation

- Each student has a GDPR-compliant file containing enrolment forms, professional assessments and any other relevant documentation.
- Aladdin stores:
 - Attendance
 - Behaviour records
 - Standardised test results
 - End-of-year reports
 - Continuum of Support plans and reviews
 - Log of Actions (communication with parents and professionals)

- Continuum of Support files are initiated by Class Teachers and maintained by SETs for students receiving School Support or School Support Plus.
- An Overall Record of SEN per class is stored in SET Microsoft Teams.
- Paper copies will be shredded when they are no longer current.

8.6 Transition & Review

- In June, assessment data and support files are shared with the incoming Class Teacher and SET.
- Follow-up meetings are held in September (weeks 2–3) to support smooth transitions.
- September is designated for relationship-building and information gathering on students in keeping with ERST ethos.

8.7 Continuing Supplementary Teaching

- Meetings (phone call or face to face) with parents are held when supplementary teaching is offered and accepted.
- Students who meet their targets may transition back to a lower staged level in the continuum of support, with progress monitored.
- **SETs prioritise students with the greatest need, considering emotional, behavioural, physical, and educational factors.**
- Support allocation is guided by the overall needs of the school community.

8.8 Appendices (Available in SET Microsoft Teams)

1. Classroom Support Checklist
2. Classroom Support Plan / Review
3. School Support Plan
4. School Support Review

5. School Support Plus Plan
6. School Support Plus Review
7. Log of Actions

9. Review: This policy will be reviewed in 3 years or sooner if required by curriculum changes, DEIS planning cycles or school needs.

Ratification: This Special Education Policy was approved by the Board of Management of CBS Primary Tralee on 15/04/2026.

Signed: June O'Callaghan Date 15/04/2026.

Chairperson, Board of Management.