

Holy Family Secondary School



Special Education Needs Policy

May 2019

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Holy Family Secondary School staff, the Parents' Association, the Student Representative Council, the Board of Management, amongst others, were consulted during the formation of the policy.

Ratified by Board of Management on: 7th May 2019

Proposed Next Policy Review date: As required

Chairperson, Board of Management
Ms T. Brophy

Secretary, Board of Management
Ms S. Allen

Representative of the Diocese
Fr. Joe Mc Dermot

1. Link to Mission Statement

This Policy has been developed in line with our Mission Statement which states:

'We promote the Christian virtues of faith, hope, love, gentleness, respect and tolerance, and we emphasise togetherness and family. Guided by these Christian virtues, and dedicated to the pursuit of excellence, it is our mission to provide a safe, caring, inclusive learning environment in which to foster the spiritual, intellectual, academic, aesthetic, physical, emotional and social development of each student so that she may fulfil her own unique potential and may leave our school with the capacity and the willingness to contribute to the building of a society characterised by these Christian virtues'

Holy Family Secondary School continuously strives to create a progressive learning environment for our students, guided by Christian values.

2. Rationale

Holy Family Secondary School, in compliance with its Mission Statement welcomes applications from students with S.E.N. The school operates an open admissions policy; promoting equality of access, participation and benefit for all, in as far, as the school can fulfil the needs of an individual student. This is consistent with the provisions of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2002, Section 2, which provides that;

"a child 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 interests of the child in accordance with any assessment carried out under this act, or
(b) the effective provision of education with whom the child is to be educated."*

3. Scope of this policy

The policy also operates within a legislative framework and takes account of the following;

- The Education Act, 1998
- The Education Welfare Act, 2000
- Equal Status Act, 2000
- The Equality Act, 2004
- The Education for persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004 (E.P.S.E.N.)
- Children First Act, 2015
- Special Education Circular 0014/2017

4. Important terms and definitions

➤ **Working Definition of Special Education Needs**

"Special education needs" means, in relation to a person, 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. While the definition in the act does not refer to students with emotional or behavioural difficulties, section 7 (4)(b) of the Equal Status Act 2000 does indicate a category of special needs in this case and the school will be mindful of such students also in providing for special needs.

➤ **National Council for Special Education (NCSE)**

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs.

➤ **National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)**

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) supports the personal, social and educational development of all children through the application of psychological theory and practice in education. The service is organised on a regional basis with psychologists being assigned to a group of schools. Psychologists work with teachers, parents and children in identifying educational needs. Where an individual assessment is required, it will only be carried out with the written consent of the parents or guardians. Psychologists provide oral and written feedback to both parents/guardians and teachers.

➤ **Special Educational Needs Organiser (S.E.N.O)**

S.E.N.Os are appointed by the NCSE to provide a direct local service to the parents of children with special educational needs and to schools within geographical areas. This involves identifying the needs of children and deciding on the level of resources schools require to provide them with an appropriate education service.

➤ **The Child and Family Agency (TUSLA)**

The statutory and school support services of the Child and Family Agency's Educational Welfare Services work together collaboratively and cohesively with schools and other relevant services to secure better educational outcomes for children and young people. Schools are obliged by law under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 to submit reports on school attendance to the Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency

List of associated acronyms

BOM	Board of Management
DES	Department of Education and Skills
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs
IEP	Individual Education Plan
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PPP	Personal Pupil Plan (for SNA care)
RACE	Reasonable Accommodation in Certificate Examinations
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENO	Special Educational Needs Organiser (NCSE)
SENCO	Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (school)
SNA	Special Needs Assistant

5. Aims of the HFSS S.E.N Policy

- To ensure that HFSS is an inclusive learning environment that enables students with special educational needs to live a full life and to realise their full potential as a unique individual through access to an appropriate broad and balanced curriculum.
- To identify, assess and support students as early as is possible and/or practicable.
- To involve parents and students in the identification, assessment and delivery of Learning Support and to strive for close co-operation between all concerned.
- To meet the needs of students who have special educational needs, by offering continual and appropriate forms of educational provision by the most efficient use of available resources.

Using the Continuum of Support framework, HFSS can identify students' educational needs, to include academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. The framework emphasises the importance of looking at a student's needs in context. Many students will have their special educational needs identified prior to their transfer to post-primary school. It is important for our school to gather information on students' learning from primary schools and parents in order to plan provision and to ensure continuity and progression in the students' education. **In order to ensure these aims are fulfilled, the Board of Management needs to be explicitly made aware of any special needs as early as possible, so that these needs can be assessed and addressed. This information must be communicated to the school (the Principal) by the parent(s)/guardian(s).** The Board of Management, in conjunction with parent(s)/guardian(s), forward all relevant information received, to the National Council for Special Education Needs (N.C.S.E.) who allocate resources based on Department of Education and Skills policy.

In making provision for special need students the Board of Management needs to know whether the incoming student has had access to any of the following:

- *Special Needs Assistant or Classroom Assistant*
- *A Special Class*
- *Help, for specific needs, from any Resource Teacher*
- *Assistance with behavioural modification*
- *Psychological assessment - report to be provided*
- *Any additional resources to help with their special needs*
- *Help in areas including, visual impairment, hearing impairment, general learning disability or emotional disturbance*
- *Exemption from Irish*
- *Any resource in relation to travel or mobility, etc.*
- *Other resources not listed above*

NOTE: If an expert report is provided, it should include a workable strategy for addressing the needs, allowing for the resources available, as far as is practicable.

Having gathered all relevant information and professional documentation, the school will assess how the special needs of the students can be met. Please note, it is never the school's intention to delay allocations

or the implementation of strategies but it may take some time for the Department of Education and Skills to process such applications. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are strongly advised to inform the school as early as possible and discuss their particular situation well in advance of their child's commencement in first year.

The school will use the resources provided by the Department of Education and Skills to make reasonable provision and accommodation for students with disabilities or special educational needs. Further to the procedures outlined above and in accordance with Section 14.1(e) of the E.P.S.E.N. Act 2004, the school shall ensure that *“teachers and other relevant employees of the school are aware of the importance of identifying children and students who have special educational needs.”*

General Data Protection Guidelines: At Holy Family Secondary School, we collect and use our students' personal data under the legal basis for information about special educational needs in order to provide our students' with appropriate education and support and to monitor their academic progress. We share this personal data with third parties, including other Government bodies. This includes the State Examinations Commission, the Department of Education and Skills, NCSE, TUSLA and other agencies as necessary.

The level of sharing and the nature of what is shared depend on various factors. The Government bodies to which we transfer personal data will use personal data for their own purposes (including: to verify other information they already hold about) and they may aggregate it with other information they already hold about our students and their families. We are legally required to provide certain records relating to the progress of a student (under 18 years) in her education to the student's parents/guardians, including results of examinations. For further information on who we share your data with, when and in what circumstances, and why, please see our Data Protection Policy available at www.holyfamily.ie

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) have the following statutory rights that can be exercised at any time:

- (a) Right to complain to supervisory authority.
- (b) Right of access.
- (c) Right to rectification.
- (d) Right to be forgotten.
- (e) Right to restrict processing.
- (f) Right to data portability.
- (g) Right to object and automated decision making/profiling.

For further information on the retention periods, please see our Data Protection Policy.

6. The Continuum of Support in HFSS

Principles to guide the implementation process per DES circular 0014/2017

- Supports provided to students with special educational needs should be based on identified needs and be informed by regular reviews of progress (in consultation with parents and students)
- **The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in the classroom, including students with special educational needs.**

- The special education teaching supports cannot be used to reduce the student-teacher ratio for general subject teaching or to provide additional subject options for students who do not have special education needs.
- Students with the greatest levels of need should have access to the greatest level of support, and whenever possible, these students should be supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.
- Schools should establish and maintain a core team of teachers to meet the needs of students with special educational needs. Members of the team should have the necessary experience and access to continuing professional development to support the diverse needs of students with special educational needs.

Students may need to be assessed in school by the Learning Support team for the purposes of determining how best to support their individual learning needs. These assessments will consist of both formal and informal assessments.

- Formal assessment may include, but may not be limited to, CAT 4, the Diagnostic Reading Assessment, WRAT 4, NRG (New Grouping Reading Test), MCT (Maths Competency Test) and oral language assessment.
- Informal assessment will include but will not be limited to; writing samples, maths samples, learning style and in class observations.
- **All assessment results are private and confidential to each HFSS student and their parents/guardians.**

The Continuum of Support provides a framework for schools to enable them to identify and respond to students' needs in a flexible way. This process is also supported through engagement with external professionals, as required. The Continuum of Support suggests the following levels of support

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| 1. Support Plus (for a Few) | Individualised & Specialist Support |
| 2. School Support (for Some) | Response to Groups and Individuals |
| 3. Whole-School & Classroom Support (for All) | Preventative & Proactive Approaches |

- Step 1: Identification of students with special educational needs
- Step 2: Setting learning targets
- Step 3: Planning teaching methods and approaches
- Step 4: Organising early intervention and prevention programmes
- Step 5: Organising and deploying teaching resources
- Step 6: Tracking, recording and reviewing progress

Categories of special educational needs

The various categories of special educational needs, the definitions of these categories, and the criteria for the allocation of additional resources and the procedures for application are set by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and are as follows:

- Physical disability
- Hearing impairment
- Visual impairment
- Emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems
- Severe emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems
- Mild general learning disability
- Borderline general learning disability
- Specific learning disability
- Moderate general learning disability
- Severe or profound general learning disability
- Autism/autistic spectrum disorder
- Students with special educational needs arising from an assessed syndrome
- Specific speech and language disorder
- Multiple disabilities

SEN Student Support Teams;

The HFSS Special Education Team led by the school's SENCO, work together to co-ordinate, facilitate, monitor and review students' progress.

The HFSS Pastoral Care and Student Wellbeing Team meet regularly to review and implement whole school support strategies for the HFSS student body.

7. Access to Psychological Reports

Student support files will be kept on each student with identified SEN. Information in the files includes psychological reports, results from entrance assessments, correspondence between the school, parents and other relevant agencies, and applications for support and concessions. Files are maintained by the SENCO and access is afforded to the following personnel; the Senior Management Team, members of the S.E.N. department, the Year Heads and the Guidance Counsellor(s).

Beyond these individuals, information regarding special needs is communicated to teachers on a need-to-know basis. In accordance with section 14 (1.d) of the E.P.S.E.N. Act 2004, the school *'shall ensure that all relevant teachers and other relevant employees of the schools are aware of the S.E.N. of students'*.

Information is provided to teachers at staff meetings. Other newly identified students are notified to the teachers as the year progresses. This is the responsibility of the SENCO.

8. Responsibilities and Standard Operating Procedures

Role of the Board of Management

- To ensure that a policy is in place and that it is reviewed regularly and to ensure that the school meets its requirements in relation to inclusion under the Education Act (1998) and all relevant legislation.

Role of the Principal and/or Deputy Principal

- To oversee and develop the implementation of the HFSS policies on S.E.N.
- To ensure adequate timetabling of hours for learning support and resource hours and to allocate time for staff to reflect, review and plan curricular arrangements, for planning for students with S.E.N., for consulting with support personnel and other professionals regarding the needs, progress, and review of individual students.
- To provide adequate time for review of policy by special needs team as required. To organise continuous professional development in Special Education Needs (S.E.N.) for staff.

Role of the Special Education Needs Coordinator- SENCO

- To coordinate the collection of assessments of incoming students and work with parent(s)/guardian(s) and feeder schools to identify students with special needs.
- To work effectively with Special Needs Assistants (SNA). To meet regularly with SNA(s).
- To work with the Senior Management Team in the allocation of SEN timetabling and provision.
- To be responsible for the submission of N.C.S.E. forms and be responsible for liaising with external service providers i.e. N.E.P.S. and the Special Education Needs Organiser (S.E.N.O.)
- To coordinate the exemptions from Irish and to arrange the applications for reasonable accommodations for the State Examinations.
- To organise assessments with NEPS and to liaise with external agencies.

Role of the Subject Teachers

- To implement the S.E.N. policy, by taking into account the needs and learning styles of all their students and to employ suitable teaching methods so that all students can access the curriculum at an appropriate level (for example, differentiation, appropriate class tests/exams etc.)
- **The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in the classroom, including students with special educational needs.**

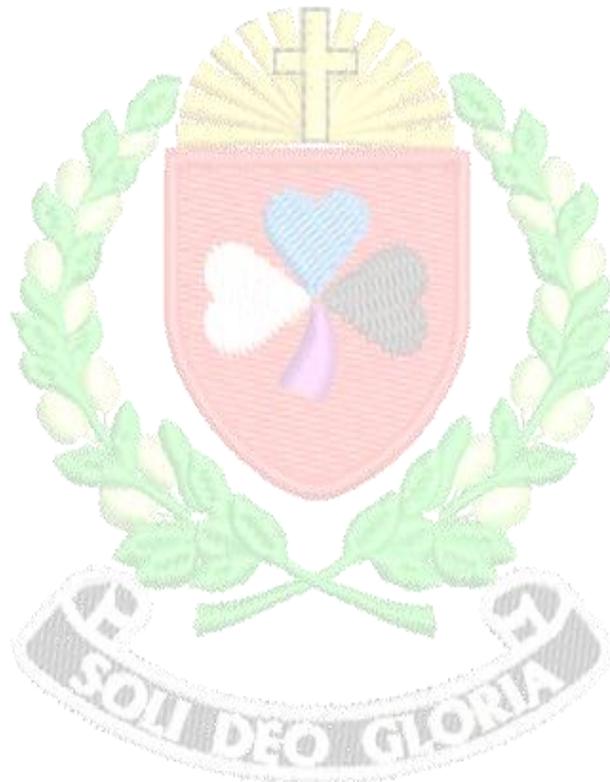
Role of the Learning Support Teachers

- To teach individual and/or small groups of students/co-teach as required for S.E.N.
- To advise subject teachers and other departments on employing differentiated teaching methods and resources in their subject teaching.

Role of the Special Needs Assistants

- To carry out duties as assigned by the Principal, in consultation with the S.E.N. in accordance with Circular 0030/2014.
- To meet regularly with S.E.N team.
- To cater for the care needs of the S.E.N. Students including assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene.
- To provide special assistance where necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. writing, typing, photocopying etc.

- To provide assistance on out-of-school activities as may be required.
- To assist in the organisation and procurement of items needed for class e.g. textbooks, P.E. gear etc. and in the organisation of the student's locker.
- To assist the teachers in the supervision of students with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods.
- To encourage each student to become more independent and self-reliant.



Role of the Guidance Counsellor

- To participate in the preparation of the S.E.N. Policy of the school and to work with the Special Needs Team and other staff in the implementation and review of this policy.
- To liaise on an ongoing basis with the other members of the S.E.N. Team and Pastoral Care Team as relevant matters arise and to provide a range of services to all students, including careers information, study skills and examination techniques, consultation with parents, referral services etc. with an awareness of the S.E.N. of students.
- To work together with S.E.N. Team to conduct assessments of incoming first years and other students new to the school and to advise the Principal of any matters arising from such assessments.
- To support students who have been referred and to advise on supports available at third level for S.E.N. students and to assist students in assessing these supports

Student Involvement

- To contribute to the drawing up of learning programmes and the setting of learning targets for themselves.
- To contribute to the review of learning programmes.
- To co-operate with the agreed programme and its evaluation by participation in appropriate tests and assessments.

Links with Outside Agencies and Services

The E.P.S.E.N. Act (2004) assures interlinking provision between the National Council for Special Education Needs (NCSE), TUSLA and school.

In accordance with this act, the school will work with the local S.E.N.O, the local N.E.P.S. psychologist, the visiting teachers for the Blind and the Hearing impaired, psychologists, psychiatrists from the social welfare Department and the Health Executive and any other relevant professionals in providing an integrated response to the needs of any particular student

It may be necessary to hold case meetings with relevant professionals with the permission and knowledge of the student's parents (and their attendance) in order to determine the best approach and provision for the students in question. Notes from such meetings will be recorded and maintained in the student's file.

9. Advice for Parents

Holy Family Secondary School believes that effectiveness of any assessment or intervention will be influenced by the involvement and interest of the child and his/her parents. Both the parents and the students have important and relevant information to offer.

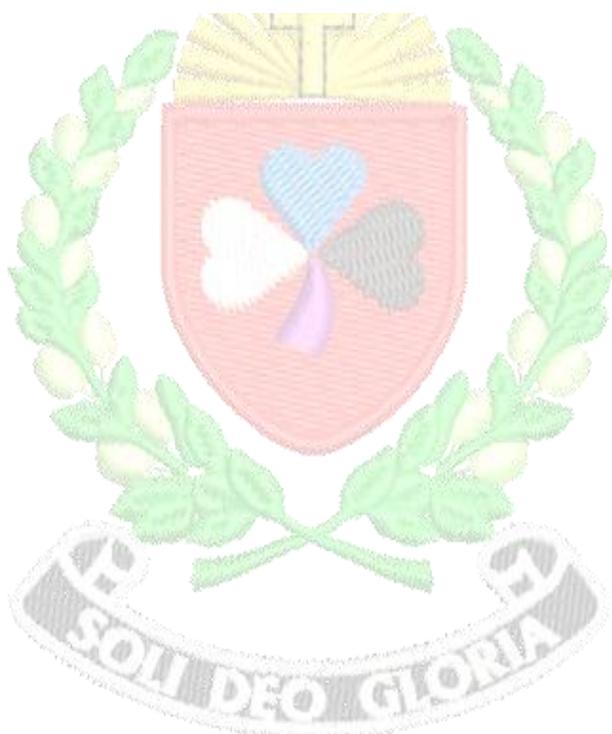
Parents are invited to contact the Learning Support Department during the year in addition to meeting the Learning Support teachers at Parent/Teacher Meetings. Parents are always contacted if a student is to be referred for assessment and afterwards to discuss the outcome of the assessment.

Parents are expected to support the work of the school with the student and to ensure the correct use and maintenance of any aids or equipment that are provided for the student.

National Council for Special Education www.ncse.ie

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs arising from disabilities with particular emphasis on children. The Council was first established as an independent statutory body by order of the Minister for Education and Science in December 2003

A Guide for Parent(s)/Guardian(s): <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/a-new-model-for-allocating-special-education-teaching-support-to-mainstream-post-primary-schools.pdf>



Appendix 1: Policy Review Timeline

HFSS SCHOOL POLICY REVIEW:

Special Education Needs Policy

PROCESS STAGE	DATE	NOTES
Identification Primary Planning Meeting	Feb 2015	Meeting of SMT with Learning Support dept. Policy considerations discussed.
Scoping document (DRAFT 1)	March 2015	Focus group advised SMT/Learning Support dept. on current best practice re: policy development.
Discussion document finalised (DRAFT 2)	April 2015	
Circulation of discussion document to focus group (staff) (DRAFT 2)	May 2015	Focus Group for discussion document with Learning Support Department teachers 7 th May 2015 – ratified by BOM
Circulation of discussion document	April 2019	Review of existing policy (2015 version)
Review by Planning Team	May 2019	SET focus group with SENCO and SMT
Consultation with Board of Management	May 2019	
Ratification date (BOM)	7 th May 2019	Implemented as ratified