



November 7th 2013

Special Education Needs Policy

As an educational community we strive to embody the values of unity, truth and love in our everyday interactions.

GOOD COUNSEL COLLEGE

NEW ROSS, CO WEXFORD.

AN AUGSTINIAN SCHOOL

Good Counsel College is a learning community within the Augustinian tradition.

We continue to grow as a caring, respectful and progressive community which supports the development of the whole person.

School Mission Statement

Aims and Objectives

As set out in The Education Act 1998, The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004, Good Counsel College aims to:

- Give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children who have a disability or who have other Special Educational Needs (SEN), as they relate to education and in so far as the school can cater for them.
- Provide, as far as is practicable and having regard to the resources available, a level and quality of education appropriate to the needs and abilities of all students in the school.
- Ensure that students with SEN are educated in an inclusive environment, as far as possible.
- Affirm that students with SEN have the same right to avail of, and benefit from education as students who do not have those needs.
- Ensure that students with SEN are identified and provided for in a fair and equitable manner so that their learning potential and their sense of self-worth and dignity is developed and respected.
- Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the SEN of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.
- Ensure that SEN is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.
- Ensure that students with SEN are offered a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Set high standards for students with SEN and provide them with appropriate guidance, encouraging them to achieve to their full potential.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with SEN.
- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at home.

- Provide for the involvement of parents in the education of their children and in the decision making process in relation to their children, in so far as is practical.
- Co-operate and work closely with the National Council for Special Educational Needs (NCSE) and other agencies with regard to the education of students with SEN.
- Co-ordinate the advice, guidance and support of other agencies in supporting students with SEN.
- Ensure the effective and efficient use of resources, constantly updated and renewed.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of practice in support of students with SEN.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all students attending Good Counsel College.

The Legal Context

This policy is drafted in the context of the specific provisions and definitions with regard to children with disabilities and SEN, and the statutory requirements placed on schools and Boards of Managements by:

- The Education Act 1998
- The Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
- The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004

Students with Special Educational Needs

The school adheres to the definition of Special Educational Needs as outlined in the EPSEN Act 2004 namely:

“a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate 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”

Good Counsel College recognises these needs in the following categories of students:

- Those who have already been identified as having SEN prior to transfer as per DES guidelines.
- Those who are identified after enrolment as requiring additional educational support while in the school.
- Students, who for a variety of reasons may require temporary special educational support, (e.g. long term illness etc).
- Students, who because of learning, social or behavioural problems may be considered marginalised.
- Provisions are in place for students whose first language is not English and who have been assessed and diagnosed with SEN according to DES Guidelines.

Admissions Policy

Good Counsel College affirms the right of all students to a full education in as inclusive a setting as possible in line with the school mission statement outlined above.

Students with SEN follow the school's Admissions Policy. However, to ensure that the school can provide for individual needs the procedures are as follows:

- The SEN coordinator (SENco), where necessary, meets with parents/guardians prior to the student enrolling in September.
- Where deemed necessary the SENco meets with the Primary School Principal/Resource Teachers to facilitate the transition from primary to secondary school.
- All supporting documentation including medical and educational reports must accompany enrolment forms.
- Interested parties (e.g. Health Board, NEPs, and SENO) may be consulted about the application.

If these procedures are adhered to:

- A student with special educational needs will be offered a place in Good Counsel College, if this is considered **by all parties** concerned to be in his best educational interest.
- The student, his parents/guardians must accept and commit to, the expectations of a second level school.

To assist in the process of choosing a school, parents/guardians and 6th class students are encouraged to attend the school Open Day in November. In exceptional circumstances, an additional visit during final term of the preceding year may be arranged for some students.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the Board of Management

- To ensure that all students with SEN are identified and assessed.
- To ensure that the school has an SEN Policy in place, to monitor the implementation of that policy and to ensure its evaluation.
- To ensure that a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum is provided in the school to ensure in as far as is practical that students with SEN leave school with the skills necessary to participate to the level of their capacity in an inclusive way in society.
- To ensure that necessary resources are sought on behalf of students with SEN.
- To ensure that a SENco is appointed from among the teaching staff.
- To promote the development of positive partnerships with parents and other relevant agencies/personnel and to ensure that parents are informed of their child's SEN and how these needs are being met.
- To ensure that parents are consulted with regard to and invited to participate in the making of all significant decisions concerning their child's education.
- To ensure that the SEN Policy forms part of the School plan.
- To develop a whole school approach to literacy and numeracy under Section 14 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.
- To ensure that an awareness of SEN is inculcated in students in the school.

The Role of the Principal

- On behalf of the Board of management of Good Counsel College, the Principal has responsibility for all aspects of the day-to-day management of policy and provision for students with SEN. The Principal may delegate certain functions to appropriate teachers and appoint a SENco from amongst the staff and work closely with the co-ordinator.
- On drafting and/or reviewing such plans, the Principal shall ensure that cognisance is taken, at the appropriate time, of the needs of the student to continue his education or training on becoming an adult.
- To inform the Board of Management of issues, which are relevant to SEN.
- In consultation with the SENco and other relevant personnel, to liaise with the Department of Education and Science regarding needs and provision. This also includes applications for reasonable accommodations and language exemptions in relation to state examinations as well as assessments.
- To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources, including the allocation of resource hours and funds.
- To establish a ‘Special Needs Support Team’ within the school with a specific remit to ensure identification of and support for students with SEN.
- To promote a whole school approach to SEN, making all staff aware of their responsibilities in this area and to facilitate appropriate staff development in this area.
- To promote the development of positive partnerships with parents of students with SEN.
- To ensure that procedures exist for consultation with feeder primary schools with regard to the enrolment of new students with SEN.

The Role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

A SENco is responsible for the operation of the SEN policy and coordination of provision for students with learning difficulties.

A SENco should seek to develop effective ways of overcoming barriers to learning and sustaining effective teaching to meet pupils' needs.

The key responsibilities of the SENco include:

- Overseeing the day to day operation of the school's SEN policy
- Liaising with and advising fellow teachers
- Managing the SEN team of teachers and learning support assistants
- Coordinating provision for pupils with SEN
- Overseeing the records on all pupils with SEN
- Liaising with parents of pupils with SEN
- Contributing to the in-service training of staff
- Liaising with external agencies.
- Determining, as a final arbiter, who attends Learning Support and who is returned to mainstream class.
- Making application to the SENO for appropriate resource hour provision.
- Making application to the SENO for appropriate SNA provision.
- Co-ordinating SNA provision.

The Role of the Subject Teacher

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

- Be aware of the School's policy and procedures (as outlined in this document) for dealing with students with SEN.
- Seek advice from the SEN Department regarding students with Special Educational Needs.
- Take responsibility for their own continuous professional development particularly with regard to common difficulties e.g. Dyslexia & Specific Language difficulties
- Develop an attitude of ownership to the education of students in their classes with SEN.
- Where a student has an SNA the subject teacher should plan how to most effectively engage the SNA in consultation with the resource teacher or the SENco.
- Support/encourage independence re. learning in the student. This is particularly important for Senior Cycle students.
- Fill in referral forms for students about whom they have a concern.

The obligation is on the subject teacher to refer students with SEN.

The Role of the Guidance Counsellor

The guidance counsellor is a member of the SEN Support Team and works with other members of the team in facilitating the provision of education for students with special educational needs and their inclusion in the school.

The guidance counsellor has an important role in assisting all students, including those with SEN at the different stages of schooling.

It is acknowledged that students with SEN may require greater support at formal transfer points in their school career and the Guidance Counsellor will be particularly aware of these students.

When appropriate the guidance counsellor is available to staff who may want to seek advice/relevant information regarding students with SEN and how they can best be supported in school.

The Role of the Learning Support / Resource Teacher

The resource/learning support teacher works closely with students who have SEN, the SEN Team and in partnership with subject teachers thus ensuring that students are supported as effectively as possible.

The duties of the resource/learning support teacher include:

- Identifying students with SEN
- Teaching students with SEN in small groups or one-to-one settings
- Providing additional support in the areas of literacy and numeracy
- Planning and implementing effective teaching strategies for students with SEN
- Helping students to cope with and overcome problems that arise because of learning difficulties
- Encouraging students to develop self confidence and independence, and to reach their full potential
- Developing and fostering the appropriate skills and social abilities to enable the optimum development of pupils.
- Assessing students progress
- Recording students progress through the use of progress reports.
- Evaluating interventions and teaching methodologies and making the necessary amendments to ensure student learning and progress
- Adapting the National Curriculum and conventional teaching methods to meet individual needs.
- Using audio-visual materials and computers to stimulate interest and learning.
- Planning and delivering lessons, setting and marking assignments.
- Assessing and recording children's progress.
- Working as part of the SEN Team and within the wider school staff and liaising with other relevant individuals such as educational psychologists and parents.
- Providing advice to subject teachers as to the teaching methodologies best suited to that student where appropriate.

The Role of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

The Special Needs Assistant provides care assistance to named students who have SEN. They make a valuable contribution to the school's capacity to provide inclusive education to these students.

The SENco and SEN Team work collaboratively in devising an appropriate strategy plan for a student with SEN. The SNA is made aware of this plan and given guidance on their role in the successful implementation of this plan.

The SNA plays an important role in the health and safety of the student and in their social, emotional and educational development. It is important that the SNA supports student participation in school life without developing a culture of dependency.

The duties of the SNA involve tasks of a non-teaching nature such as:

- Attending both Staff and Departmental meetings when appropriate.
- Assisting / escorting students on school trips.
- Giving special assistance as necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. helping special needs students with typing, writing or other use of equipment.
- Assisting with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene and being mindful of health and safety needs of the student.
- Assisting with examinations (if appropriate).
- Assisting the teacher in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreation and in movement from one classroom to another.
- Accompanying individual or small groups who may be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom. An SNA should not be asked to withdraw a student from a classroom unless this is a strategy that has been agreed by the SEN department. In such instances teachers will have been informed.
- SNAs may not act as either substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class.
- Participation with school development planning, where appropriate, and co-operation with any such changes with policies and practices arising from the school development process.

- Engagement with parents of special needs pupils in both formal and informal structures as required and directed by the SENco.
- Other appropriate duties as may be determined by the needs of the pupils and the school.
- SNAs may be re-assigned to other appropriate work when special needs students are absent or when particularly urgent work demands arise.
- SNAs are expected to treat all matters relating to school business and their work, as strictly confidential.

The Role of the Special Educational Needs Support Team

The Special Educational Needs support team comprises the:

- Principal/Deputy Principal
- Resource Teacher
- Learning Support Teacher
- Guidance Counsellor
- Year Head
- SEN Co-ordinator
- Other Interested Parties

Through the work of the SEN Support Team the school endeavours to create a whole school ownership in the management of SEN. The SEN Support Team play a key role in the evaluation of practice and procedures relating to SEN.

The School acknowledge that it is particularly important to continually review and develop our practices in relation to:

- Accessing relevant information about all our intake students
- How we use assessment data results, including the Cognitive Ability Tests & DAT Scores
- Literacy and Numeracy Testing for Junior Cycle students
- More Able students

The Special Educational Needs Support Team plays a key role in this process.

Transfer from Primary School

Prior to entry to Good Counsel College the SENco visits or contacts the feeder Primary Schools. The school sees this liaison as an important step in ensuring proper identification of students with SEN and the continuity of provision for them.

Where deemed appropriate visits are arranged for students with SEN prior to their transfer to Good Counsel College.

Information received from the Primary Schools and parents coupled with the results of the Cognitive Ability Tests help the school identify those students who may need additional support in Good Counsel College.

All First Year teachers are briefed on matters relating to the students they are going to teach or come into contact with. Clearly the extent to which individual teachers are given confidential information is a sensitive matter. It is, however, important that teachers have as much information as possible regarding the students they teach if they are to contribute towards the best possible learning environment for them. Therefore, a register of students with SEN can only be accessed from the SENco or the Principal or Deputy Principal.

Students transferring into other Year Groups

When a student is accepted into Good Counsel College to join a year group other than First Year, information is sought from their previous school. The Principal/Deputy Principal usually does this. This information is passed to the SENco if appropriate.

Identification of Students with Special Educational Needs

Identification of students who may have SEN continues throughout their time in Good Counsel College.

The education of students throughout the school rests in the first instance with the subject teacher. Each teacher should be aware of which students are likely to experience barriers to learning. In many cases a student's needs are resolved through the provision of differentiated work suited to their needs. For those students whose progress continues to cause concern referral to the SEN Team may be appropriate. Referral to the SEN Team should be made on the Referral Form and should be underpinned by evidence which shows that despite receiving differentiated learning opportunities the student makes little or no progress even when teaching approaches are targeted to a pupil's identified area of weakness.

Having reviewed the documentation and liaised with the relevant staff, the SENco may decide that the student's needs do not warrant the involvement of learning support.

If the SEN Team decides that a student would benefit from further intervention, some of the following will be put in place:

- Some students may be referred for a Formal Assessment e.g. to NEPs
- Learning support time will be allocated.
- Teachers will be advised about students' weaknesses and possible teaching strategies they might employ in subject areas other than learning support.

Organisation of Resource / Learning Support Allocations

Regardless of level of incidence, high, low or none, all students with specific educational needs will be catered for from the cumulative resource hours available.

Arrangements for Students with Resource/Learning Support

In consideration of the definitions relevant to this policy, as outlined in the

- The Education Act 1998,
- The Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
- The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004

Good Counsel College considers a student as being in need of learning support if he:

- Is recognised as being at the 10th percentile or below on a standardised test and following an assessment by a relevant professional.
- Is failing to achieve in school due to specific personal/familial/social circumstances **always cognisant of their current teachers' professional evaluations.**

A student is defined as having special educational needs if he has a learning/physical/behavioural/emotional difficulty, which calls for support provision to be made for him. This in particular refers to:

- Students with a disability that prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities provided for students of the same age.
- Students who, following the correct identification procedures, have been assessed as having SEN by a relevant professional with attendant recommendations.

Day to Day Organisation

In general, the SEN Department endeavour to provide an eclectic mix of teaching styles and strategies when working with students with SEN. These include 1-1 support, team teaching and target (small group) teaching, guided by principles of efficacy and efficiency. The individual needs of the student and the available resources of the school dictate the type of practice which is most appropriate.

In deciding how best to support a student, the SEN Team will take account of:

- The student's learning profile
- The student's ability
- The student's wishes
- His parent's wishes
- How best to match the student to available programme
- Recommendations from relevant professionals
- Available resources

Junior Cycle

In the subject areas of English and Mathematics, the majority of students withdrawn for learning support will be accommodated in small groups (maximum 8 pupils). The learning support teacher will accommodate to their individual needs while ensuring the curriculum in these subjects is covered. Responsibility for examination preparation in these subjects thus transfers to the learning support teacher.

A significant number of resource students have Irish language exemptions. The SEN Department have structures in place to ensure that students get maximum benefit from the additional timetable allocation that exemption from Irish creates.

At Junior Cycle, students are withdrawn from all their Irish classes and receive additional lessons in numeracy and literacy with their resource teacher.

It is school policy that all students follow a modern language programme in First Year, even those with a language exemption. In very limited circumstances it may be beneficial/essential for a student to be withdrawn from the modern language programme. This will only occur if a resource is available to provide an alternative.

A limited number of places are allocated annually to available computer programmes. These allocations are determined by individual learning need profiles.

Senior Cycle

As at Junior Cycle, the majority of students withdrawn for learning support in English and Mathematics will be accommodated in small groups (maximum 8 pupils). The learning support teacher will accommodate to their individual needs while ensuring the curriculum in these subjects is covered. Responsibility for examination preparation in these subjects thus transfers to the learning support teacher.

At Senior Cycle, withdrawal for those students with an Irish exemption cannot be guaranteed and any resource for this cohort will depend on available resources.

Reasonable Accommodations

If the SENco considers that a student with SEN is entitled to reasonable accommodations, applications will be made to the DES. Generally this involves:

- The assistance of a scribe or reader
- The use of a tape recorder or word processor
- A waiver in spelling or grammar

Arrangements at Junior Certificate

Applications for reasonable accommodations are collated and signed off by the school at Junior Certificate level.

Arrangements at Leaving Certificate

The School assists parents and students in collating the requested information if they decide to submit an application for Reasonable Accommodations. The State Examinations Commission considers and decides on the matter.

Monitoring Evaluation, Assessment and Reporting

All students are assessed on an ongoing basis. Assessment may be formal, informal, summative or formative.

Formal Assessment

- Incoming First Year students sit the NFER Cognitive Ability Tests (CAT) prior to entry.
- Students sit house examinations in December and at the end of the school year.
- A continuous assessment grade is reported to parents at parent teacher meetings.
- Students sit Differential Aptitude Tests (DAT) in Transition Year
- Other professionals working with the school may formally assess students with SEN.

Informal Assessment

- A continuous assessment based on class tests is reported to parents at parent teacher meetings.
- End of unit/chapter tests
- In class questioning
- Assessing homework/project work
- The literacy and numeracy skills of students with SEN may be assessed.

The responsibility for many aspects of formal and informal assessments lies in the first instance with the subject teacher. The organisation of the DAT and CAT tests is the responsibility of the Guidance Department who are supported by the SEN team.

Resource/Learning Support teachers take responsibility for literacy and numeracy testing of students with SEN.

Using Assessment Data

Assessment data is used to:

- Identify students with SEN.
- Identify students' individual needs
- Aid in the design of intervention strategies
- Monitor student progress
- Inform future learning direction

Recording Assessment Data

Teachers record assessment marks both formal and informal in the Teacher Planner provided by the school each year. House examination results are included on the school report to parents in December and at the end of the school year. A continuous assessment result is reported to parents at parent teacher meetings. Copies of the student's reports are available on their file.

The SEN department maintain files for the students with whom they work (Learning Support and Resource students). Included in these files are any additional assessments that the students may have taken.

Access to Assessment Records

The school is aware that some assessment material is of a sensitive nature and therefore it is treated confidentially and only made available to appropriate personnel. The SEN Department manage a significant amount of the assessment information for students with SEN. Relevant information is disseminated as appropriate by the SEN team.

Monitoring Arrangements

The responsibility for monitoring student progress lies in the first instance with the subject teacher. If a student has been identified as having SEN, the SEN Department will also play a key role in monitoring student progress.

Evaluation

The successes of any intervention strategies are monitored on an on-going basis through formal and informal assessment. The SEN department endeavours to evaluate the progress of students with SEN on a continual basis and adjust intervention strategies when and where necessary.

Involvement of Parents

The school regards the partnership with parents as a very important one and is always open and responsive to expressions of concern made by parents. Parents/Guardians are invited and encouraged to attend any meeting concerning their son's progress. The Class Tutor, Year Head and the SENco are available to meet with parents regarding concerns.

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to discuss any issues or concerns with the school at the earliest opportunity. The school recognises its responsibility under Section 14 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 to:

- Inform parents of their child's SEN and how those are being met.
- Consult parents with regard to the making of all decisions of a significant nature concerning their child's education and invite them to participate in such decisions.

The Special Needs Department is in regular contact with the parents of students with SEN. This contact can take the form of a meeting or a telephone call. Students receive a school report on two occasions in the school year. There is one parent teacher meeting each year where parents have the opportunity to meet with all teachers. The SEN Team make themselves available to parents on these evenings.

Involvement of Students

Students with SEN are encouraged to adopt an active approach to their education. Where appropriate, their needs and supports required are discussed. Thus, the student is involved in a practical way in learning plans and programmes and assessing progress. Generally, students with SEN are very open to discussing their educational development.

Links with Outside Agencies and Services

The school works with a significant number of outside agencies. These include:

- National Education Psychology Service
- National Council for Special Education
- State Examination Commission
- Visiting Teacher Service

HSE to include:

- HSE Social Worker Team
- Psychologists
- Psychiatrists
- Consultant paediatricians
- Foster Care Workers
- Occupational Therapists
- Physiotherapists
- Speech & Language Therapists
- College & University Student Support Services
- Dyslexia Association of Ireland
- Aspire (Aspergers support)
- Association for Higher Education Access and Disability
- National Council for the Blind of Ireland
- Irish Learning Support Teachers Association
- Irish Association of Special Education Teachers
- The Dyspraxia Association

This list is not exhaustive and the school will further develop links with outside agencies as the needs of the students dictate.

Conclusion

This Policy is organic by its nature. It is envisaged that with changing perceived needs and with insights gained that it will need to be constantly appraised and, if necessary, changed.

Board Adoption

Formally adopted by the Board on: _____

Chairperson's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Principal's Signature: _____ Date: _____

The Board of Management agrees to review this policy at its _____ Board meeting in _____