

# **BLACKROCK COLLEGE**

## **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

A central theme of the Mission Statement of Blackrock College is “to provide a community environment in which each student can develop his full human potential”. Furthermore, the Enrolment Policy of the College “supports the principle of inclusiveness, particularly with reference to the enrolment of children with a disability or other special educational needs”. Our policy on Special Educational Needs (SEN) supports these aims, and is written in the context of recent legislation particularly the Education Act 1998, Equal Status Act 2000 and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.

### **Aim of Special Educational Needs (SEN) Department**

The aim of the SEN Department is to ensure that there is an appropriate system of identification of the special educational needs of students at all stages of their progress through the school, and that there is an adequate, co-ordinated and continuous response to the special educational needs thus identified. This involves educating these students in an integrated and inclusive environment, and ensuring that they share with their peers as complete an educational experience as is possible. This requires a whole-school approach to meeting their special educational needs.

### **PRESENT STRUCTURE OF SEN DEPARTMENT**

- ❖ Head of Department ~ Consultative role
- ❖ One Learning Support Teacher
- ❖ One Resource Teacher

### **Identification, Screening and Referral Procedures**

This entails the screening of all new students enrolling in First Year in Willow Park School. These students are assessed in Maths and English. Likewise, the English and Maths attainments of the students transferring from Sixth Form in Willow Park are monitored. In consultation with management and SEN personnel in Willow Park, these results are used to identify students who need additional support in Maths and English in First Year. The parents of these students are contacted and are invited to meet the SEN Department personnel to discuss these difficulties. Some of these students may have been assessed by external professionals or may at this point be referred to such professionals.

Application is made to the Department of Education and Science (DES) for Resource Teaching support in First Year for the pupils identified as presenting with severe difficulties. This application has to be repeated when these students are transferring from First Year into Second Year. This requires liaison between the SEN personnel in both schools.

Within Blackrock College, the results of progress tests and in-house examinations are monitored carefully by the Deans to identify students who are underachieving. Such students are then referred to the SEN Department. Subject teachers and Counsellors who are concerned about students usually communicate their concern through the Deans or directly to the SEN Department. Parents also refer their sons either directly to the SEN Department or through the Deans.

Students transferring to Blackrock College, from other secondary schools, should present for assessment if requested (Appendix 111). Previous professional assessments should be supplied. All reasonable steps will be taken by the College SEN Department to identify those pupils who present with difficulties.

In-house teachers should communicate their concern about pupil in their class by the Teacher Referral Form (Appendix 1) which is available from the SEN Department or Year Dean.

### **Assessment and Planning**

When a student is referred to the SEN Department, parents are contacted and their written consent for an assessment is sought. This assessment is conducted by the SEN personnel, and usually involves a test of literacy skills. Results are communicated to parents, the relevant Dean and to the Principal's office. The student may be referred to outside professionals such as psychologists, speech and language therapists, or other such professionals deemed appropriate.

A decision is made at this point, in consultation with parents, as to whether any intervention by the SEN personnel is warranted. Such intervention may take the form of Learning Support, Resource Teaching or possibly only applying for considerations in state examinations or exemptions from particular subjects. In relation to students who require some form of intervention, the SEN personnel identify the strengths and needs of the students, and plan the necessary intervention in consultation with the parent and the student, and with reference to reports of external professionals. SEN personnel aim to consult with subject teachers as far as possible when planning interventions. The Resource Teacher informs subject teachers if one of their students is in receipt of Resource teaching support. Individual Education Plans are mandatory for each student, who is presenting with the more serious levels of difficulty, under new legislation. (Appendix 2)

### **Intervention**

This involves the provision and co-ordination of supplementary teaching on an individual or small group basis for pupils identified as presenting with special needs in the areas of literacy and numeracy which are not likely to be fully addressed within the context of the mainstream classroom. There are two levels of intervention provided, Resource teaching and Learning Support teaching. Resource Teaching can only be provided on application to, and approval by, the Department of Education and Science. It is only granted to the students with the most severe levels of difficulty. It is delivered individually or in small group settings. The Resource teacher provides support to students across the full range of subjects.

Learning Support teaching is delivered predominantly in small groups to students with less severe difficulties and who are not granted Resource teaching hours. The Learning Support teacher, at present, provides support predominantly in English. Supplementary English is also offered as a timetable option in Second and Third Year to students with special educational needs who are on a reduced timetable, e.g. exempt from Irish. Both Learning Support and Resource teaching is done almost exclusively on a withdrawal basis, though SEN personnel can also have a role in providing support in the mainstream classrooms. The nature of support offered in Maths has been to ensure that the number of students in the lowest stream in Maths is kept as low as possible. This type of support has been found to be most effective when the number of students in these classes is kept to a maximum of seven.

- The number of students in the lowest stream Maths classes in Second, Third, Fifth and Sixth Years should be kept to a maximum of seven students, where practical.
- The number of students in the lowest stream English classes in Second, Third, Fifth and Sixth Years should be kept to a maximum of ten students, where practical.

### **Liaising with Colleagues and Parents**

SEN personnel advise school management on current legislation in relation to special educational needs provision and act as a resource for management in responding to queries or demands from parents in relation to such provision. They may also advise on class placements and subject choices for pupils with special educational needs. SEN personnel provide advice, as requested, for teaching colleagues in meeting the special educational needs of pupils in the regular classroom. They offer advice and information on how a pupil's particular difficulties may impact on performance in a particular subject or on specific aspects within a particular subject.

SEN personnel are available, by appointment, to meet parents to discuss and advise on the special educational needs of their sons and would meet, on a regular basis, the parents of the pupils with whom they are directly involved. It is necessary to involve some parents in supplementing the intervention programmes being initiated in the school in relation to their sons. There is also telephone communication with a large number of parents, including many whose sons do not receive support directly from the SEN Department.

Information on different types of disabilities and their educational implications is made available to all staff members. From time to time, SEN personnel will make presentations to staff on issues relating to SEN.

All new teachers are informed, as part of their induction, of the SEN policy within the school and receive the resource pack on special educational needs.

### **Liaising with External Agencies**

There is need for ongoing liaison with personnel from the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS), and likewise with the newly appointed Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) in relation to students with special educational needs within the school. SEN personnel prepare data for the Department of Education and Science in support of requests for additional resources and for personnel to meet the special educational needs of students. This involves a preliminary assessment and the processing of psychologists' reports. It involves liaising with parents, with personnel in other schools, and professionals, such as psychologists and speech and language therapists. The SEN personnel, in conjunction with relevant postholders, apply to the DES for language exemptions and special considerations in State examinations on behalf of individual students. These special considerations include a waiver from being examined in spelling and grammar in language subjects, or the assistance of a Reader, the use of a word processor or possibly a Scribe, or the facility to do one's examinations orally, either on tape or using voice activated software.

SEN personnel are also involved, in conjunction with management, and the relevant postholder, in recruiting and allocating personnel as supervisors in separate examination centres for State examinations, and in instructing them in relation to the examination regulations for such centres. If students have indicated on their CAO Application Forms that they are presenting with learning difficulties, SEN personnel may be required to complete a form for the CAO, outlining how a student's difficulties have impacted on his academic performance.

Special consideration is given during in-house examinations, when requested, provided it is funded by the guardians of the pupil and personnel is available.

### **Administration**

A file is maintained on each student referred to the SEN Department. SEN personnel keep a record of the results of all assessments and reassessments conducted. They are responsible for the secure storage of all reports from external professionals and copies of all correspondence from the Department of Education and Science, parents and outside professionals. A written record of telephone contacts is kept as required.

All reports relating to special educational needs of existing and incoming students should be made available to SEN personnel on receipt.

SEN personnel maintain a register of all students who are receiving additional support and indicate the nature of support received.

SEN personnel maintain a register of all reports from external professionals, and devise a means of informing relevant personnel of the existence of such reports.

When parents provide a copy of a report, they must sign a form indicating to whom they wish this report to be released and giving consent for such release. (Appendix 1V).

All information is managed in accordance with the directives of both the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF CURRENT LEGISLATION**

Under the terms of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, if a Principal becomes aware, through parental communication or otherwise, that a student is not benefiting from the ordinary education programme being provided in the school, he or she “must take such measures as are practicable” to meet the educational needs of that student. This will involve referral to the SEN personnel and possibly some form of intervention.

Then if the student is still not benefiting from the education programme, the Principal is required to arrange an assessment, such as a psychological assessment, after consultation with parents, within one month of forming the opinion of a need for such an assessment. Parents may also request that an assessment process be initiated. The assessment must be commenced “as soon as practicable”, but not later than one month, and it must be completed within three months. Parents must be involved in the assessment and the results must be communicated to them.

A “Statement of Findings” must be produced as a result of this assessment, and must be communicated to persons engaged in the education of the student, with parents being informed of the identity of such persons. Parents may appeal to an Appeal Board in relation to the standard of the assessment or in relation to the findings of the assessment.

If the assessment establishes that the student has special educational needs, the Principal must initiate a planning process for the student within one month of the assessment. This plan must be formulated by a planning team, including parents, the Special Educational Needs Organiser (these are newly appointed co-ordinators, external to the school and appointed by the DES), possibly the student, and others as appropriate. (the latter is likely to include SEN personnel in the school).

The plan is to be detailed and goals-driven, and it must outline a student's strengths and needs, the current levels of his attainment, and the services and supports required by the student. The plan must be reviewed within twelve months in order to ensure that the student is meeting the goals outlined in the plan, and the parents, if concerned, can request a review after six months.

The Special Education Council, also newly established under this Act, is required to ensure provision of the services and resources identified in the Education Plan as being necessary for the student. This Council can also designate a particular school for a student with SEN, and the school will be obliged to enrol that student. The school and/or parents can appeal to an Appeals Board in this regard.

## **REFERRAL FORM**

I WOULD LIKE TO REFER THE FOLLOWING STUDENT(S) TO THE SEN DEPARTMENT FOR ASSESSMENT AND/OR ASSISTANCE.

**Class:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Pupil**

**Areas of Difficulty**

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**INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN**

**DATE:**

**NAME:**

**ADDRESS:**

**TELEPHONE:**

**D.O.B.**

**CLASS**

**PEOPLE INVOLVED IN COMPILING THIS PLAN:**

**SUMMARY OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE:**

**PARENTS AND FAMILY:**

**PSYCHOLOGIST'S REPORT:**

**Other reports and information:**

**Summary of Strength and Needs:**

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>NEEDS</b>

**Long-term goals:**

**Short-term goals:**

**REVIEW DATE:**      /   /

**APPENDIX 111**

**Special Needs Department  
Blackrock College  
Tel: (01) 2888681**

Dear Parent(s)

Further to your, or your son's, request for an assessment in order to establish if he is presenting with difficulties in the areas of Reading and/or Mathematics, or to establish if application should be made on his behalf for special consideration in State examinations, I would appreciate if you would sign the Consent Form attached below in order to facilitate this process. The tests to be administered will establish his present levels of functioning in English and/or Mathematics. The results of all tests will be made available to you and will be discussed with you before any further action is taken in relation to same. The assessment can also include a Dyslexia Screening Test, if it is considered appropriate, in order to establish if your son is "at risk" of being Dyslexic and if further investigation is required in this regard. Please indicate below if you do not wish this test to be included in the assessment. Each of the tests is about 35 minutes in duration. If you wish to discuss any issue with me in advance of the assessment, you are most welcome to do so.

Yours sincerely

WILLIAM KINSELLA  
Educational Psychologist  
Special Needs Co-ordinator

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I/We being the parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_ consent to attainment test in English and/or Mathematics being administered to \_\_\_\_\_ on the understanding that the results of same will be made available to me/us.

**(Please tick one box below)**

I/We consent to the inclusion of a Dyslexia Screening Test in this assessment if it is considered appropriate

I/We would prefer if a Dyslexia Screening Test was not included in this assessment

**SIGNED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_