Policy on Learning Support/Resource Teaching

In St. Brigid’s the principal aim of learning support/resource teaching is to optimise the learning process in order to enable pupils with learning needs to achieve the highest possible levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy. We will endeavour to:

- Enable these pupils to participate in the full curriculum at their class level.
- Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in these pupils.
- Enable these pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners.
- Involve parents in supporting their children.
- Collaborate with colleagues in order to maximise learning.
- Establish early intervention programmes designed to enhance learning.

The Staged Approach to Assessment, Identification and Programme Planning

Stage 1
A class teacher or a parent may have concerns about the academic, physical, social, behavioural or emotional development of a pupil. The class teacher then administers screening measures such as checklists or teacher designed tests to meet the child’s needs. The class teacher draws up a plan for help to be administered in the normal class setting. This plan should be reviewed regularly, with appropriate parental involvement. If concern remains after a number of reviews and adaptations the learning support/resource teacher will be consulted. If supplementary teaching is deemed necessary it may be provided for a period of time for example six weeks or one term, depending on the child’s needs and progress.

Stage 2
If further intervention is deemed necessary and the pupil is referred to the learning support teacher for further diagnostic testing, the Principal will contact the parents of the child. If this diagnostic testing suggests that supplementary teaching would be beneficial, this will be arranged. The parents, class teacher and learning support teacher then draw up a learning programme, which should include appropriate
interventions for implementation in the home, in the classroom and during supplementary teaching. The pupil’s progress is reviewed regularly, in consultation with the parents. If significant concern remains after a number of reviews it may be necessary to involve outside agencies such as NEPS or the services of the Health Services Executive (HSE).

**Stage 3**
The school may formally request a consultation and an assessment of need from outside the school in respect of pupils who fail to make progress after supplementary teaching. Such specialist advice is sought from psychologists, speech therapists, audiologists and occupational therapists etc. This consultation is carried out with the permission of the child’s parents/guardians. Following the consultation the learning support/resource teacher, the class teacher, the parents and the specialist (if available) will draw up an Individual Education Plan (IEP). This is a planning process which encourages and promotes planning and assessment for an individual child. An IEP may include not only goals relating to academic or cognitive development but also those relating to motor skills, social skills, self-help skills or emotional development. This IEP will identify any additional resources that are considered necessary to implement the plan. This plan is reviewed regularly.

**Procedure for Identification/Screening/Referral of Pupils**

**Assessment of Junior Infants**
There is ongoing assessment throughout the year for all Junior Infant children. This assessment takes the form of teacher observation, the use of checklists and regular testing of numbers, letters, sounds, words etc.
December: The children are tested on their first ten letters and sounds and are then grouped according to ability.
June: The children are tested on numbers 1-5, all 26 letters and their sounds and the sight words from the Sunny Street reading programme.

**Assessment of Senior Infants**
Phonics
September: There is an initial assessment in September for all Senior Infant children. Children who are experiencing difficulties, or are new to the school, are placed in two small groups for phonics lessons, according to ability. The remainder of the children are grouped by ability.
October: Naming the letters and their sounds and writing these letters are tested again in October. Groups are then rearranged into four groups for phonics according to results and teacher observation.
February: Senior Infants are retested in February. The test is based on basic CVC words (written). The children write a three word and a five word sentence. Once again the groups are rearranged according to test results.
June: In June the Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) is administered. Girls who experience difficulty with this test will receive extra help in First Class. The boys’ results will be discussed with the relevant teachers in St. Mary’s School and any concerns will be noted.

All children in Senior Infants are tested on an ongoing basis throughout the year using checklists for word recognition from the class readers and teacher observation for language development and mathematical ability. Children who are experiencing difficulty will receive help as per the staged approach.

**Evaluation and Assessment:** At the end of May each year the Drumcondra Primary Reading Test and the Sigma-T Primary Maths Test are administered to all children from first to sixth class by the class teachers.

**Uses to which the results will be put:** The results will be used to guide teacher planning in class. The results will also be used to screen pupils for learning support.

**Writing and Storing Records of Tests:** The class teacher scores the tests and writes up the results. One copy of these results is kept on file in the filing cabinet in the classroom and another is kept in the Learning Support Room. The Principal, class teacher, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) psychologist and the learning support teacher may access these results at any time. Parents may have
access to their own child’s results. The results are kept in the school until the child is 21 years of age.

**Reporting to Parents:** The Principal will contact the child’s parents when it is considered that a child would benefit from learning support. The learning support/resource teacher will meet the parents of their pupils at the annual parent/teacher meetings. The learning support/resource teacher may contribute to the pupil’s end of year report.

**Criteria for Selection for Learning Support**
When the class teachers have scored the standardised tests in the month of May the results will be discussed by the Principal, the class teacher and the learning support/resource teacher. Learning support will be offered to pupils who have scored at or under the 12th percentile in the Drumcondra Reading Test and Sigma –T Maths Test. Should staffing allow, support teaching will be given to pupils who have scored above this but who are deemed to be in need of some support. This may take the form of in-class support (co-teaching).
Resource teaching will be given to pupils who have been assessed by the psychologist and who qualify for such under the terms of the most current Department of Education and Science (DES) circular.

**Individual Educational Plan (IEP)**
In September the learning support/resource teachers plan their groups and timetable. An IEP will be drawn up in conjunction with the parents and the class teacher. An IEP may include the goals relating to academic or cognitive development and also those relating to motor skills, social skills, self-help skills or emotional development. A copy of the IEP will be given to the child’s parents, to the class teacher and the learning support/resource teacher. The class teacher will keep the IEP in the pupil’s folder in the class filing cabinet. The learning support/resource teacher will keep a copy in the child’s file. A meeting with the class teacher, the parents and the learning support/resource teacher will take place at the end of January to review the IEP and a new plan of work will be devised. The IEP will also be reviewed at the end of the school year and suggestions will be made for the following year. Both the class
teacher and the learning support/resource teacher will devise regular plans to implement the pupil’s IEP.

**Psychological Assessment Reports**
Psychological assessment reports will normally be kept in the pupil’s file in the learning support/resource filing cabinet in the designated teacher’s room. However, where resources or additional support are being sought files will be retained in the Principal’s office.

**Group Education Plans (GEP)**
These are common targets for several students within a class who have similar difficulties. The GEP will be drawn up by the class teacher and the learning support/resource teacher and will be reviewed regularly. Teachers working with the child/children will have access to the file. These files will be kept in the filing cabinets in the classroom and the learning support/resource room and will be passed on to the next learning support/resource teacher.

**Supplementary Teaching by the Learning Support/Resource Teacher**
Supplementary teaching takes place in the classroom if it will help to meet the needs of the pupils or by withdrawal of pupils. Supplementary teaching is provided in any one of six designated rooms.

Pupils are withdrawn as follows:
- One-to-one basis depending on entitlement and if her/his educational needs are such that it is more beneficial.
- Groups of pupils with similar needs.

**Roles and Responsibilities**
The **Board of Management** has overall responsibility for developing and supporting school policy on learning support and special needs.

The **Principal Teacher** has responsibility for the school’s learning support education programme and for the operation of services for children with additional learning
needs. Part of this work involves ensuring that the teachers and parents of the pupils who are selected for diagnostic assessment and supplementary teaching are enabled to fulfil their roles as outlined in this policy. The Principal regularly communicates with outside services for example National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) in order to arrange services for children in need and to monitor their progress.

The **Class Teacher** has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in her class including those selected for supplementary teaching. She/he should endeavour to create a positive and supportive learning environment. This is best achieved by grouping pupils for instruction, differentiating the curriculum for pupils who are experiencing difficulty and liaising closely with their parents and learning support teacher. It is essential that the class teacher should contribute to the development of the learning targets in the IEP/GEP and to the planning and implementation of activities designed to attain these targets.

**The Learning Support/Resource Teacher** assists in the implementation of a broad range of strategies designed to enhance learning.

- She/he will develop an IEP/GEP for pupils who are selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with class teachers and parents.
- She/he will keep plans for, and work samples of, pupils or groups who receive learning support.
- She/he will deliver supplementary teaching to pupils from Junior Infants to 6th class who experience low achievement and/or learning difficulties (Teachers will normally be assigned to certain class groupings).
- She/he will contribute at the school level to decision-making in relation to the purchase of learning resources, books and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms and in the learning support teacher’s room.

The Principal has delegated the following tasks to the Deputy Principal. She will

- coordinate the end of year test results for each pupil.
♦ coordinate the implementation of whole school policy for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching.
♦ keep a list of all pupils attending supplementary teaching in the filing cabinet in her room.
♦ take responsibility for the safe storage of psychological assessment reports.

**Parent(s)/Guardian(s):** The learning support/resource teacher and the class teacher will work with the parent(s)/guardian(s) to help support the child in the best way possible. The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be involved with the drawing up of the IEP for their child and in carrying out the tasks they agree to do as part of the IEP. Teachers will communicate with the parent(s)/guardian(s) regularly.

**Special Needs Assistants (SNA):** A SNA is appointed to the school following application to the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO). The SENO works under the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and is an important link between the school and the Council. For example, the SENO deals with applications for additional support for pupils with learning needs. The SNA is then assigned to work with a child or children. It is the responsibility of the Principal to assign SNAs to children. The SNA may work with small groups or help individuals who require assistance, while still maintaining a supportive role with regard to the pupil for whom they have responsibility.

The class teacher and the SNA will plan for the individual needs of the child. The SNA will be given clear instruction on his/her role, but there will be room for the SNA to take initiative where appropriate. The SNA will be involved in tracking progress, drawing up and reviewing IEPs, record keeping and observation.

**Timetabling:** The learning support/resource teacher will have a timetable drawn up in conjunction with the class teachers. A copy of this timetable is given to the Principal and the class teacher.

**Homework and Spellings:** (refer to Homework Policy) These are done in conjunction with the class teacher.
**Code of Behaviour:** The school code of behaviour applies to all pupils. In our code of behaviour we set out to foster an atmosphere that is characterised by respect for all. We try to achieve this by encouraging good behaviour, tolerance, courtesy, respect for self and others and a good relationship among all members of the school community. Pupils are expected to behave with respect for the teacher and their fellow pupils when they attend learning support class. The sanctions outlined in the code of behaviour policy will apply to the pupils who misbehave in learning support/resource class. The learning support/resource teacher should endeavour to ensure that the Golden Rules are understood by the pupils in his/her care.

**Health and Safety:** Pupils who are withdrawn from their classes for learning support/resource are collected and left back to their classroom by the learning support/resource teacher. The school’s Health and Safety and Child Protection policies apply to all activities involving special education and supplementary teaching.

**Tests**
At present the Drumcondra Reading Test and Sigma-T tests are used for general testing in all classes from 1st to 6th. The Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST) is used to test all Senior Infants in May.

**Other tests available include:**
- Diagnostic Reading Test
- Aston Index
- Belfield Infant Assessment Programme
- Non Reading Intelligence Test (NRIT)
- Standard Progressive Matrices (Ravens)
- The British Picture Vocabulary Scale Test
- Early Literacy Test
- Larr Test of Emergent Literacy
- Brury Test
- The Renfrew Language Scales
- Get Reading Right. (Jackson)
- Young Group Reading Test
Single Word Spelling Test
Profile of Mathematical Skills Level 1 & 2
Basic Number Screening Test

**ICT**
There is a computer with Internet access in each of the support rooms. Five of these rooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards.

**Transfer to Secondary School**
Parents are supported in choosing an appropriate post primary school. The relevant teacher will liaise with the special education department in post primary schools and will transfer information only on receipt of written parental consent.

Ratified by the Board of Management:
June 3rd 2010
Review date: 2012/13