



JOHN SCOTTUS SECONDARY SCHOOL

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Special Educational Needs Policy

John Scottus Secondary School

John Scottus School offers a vision of education which gives young people the self mastery, strength of character and compassion to contribute meaningfully to the world around them whilst at the same time fulfilling their own unique set of talents and qualities.

It is an education based on the belief that each child can come to discover their innate gifts, that each child can come to contribute something exceptional and that each child has at their heart a limitless potential.

Central to the ethos of the school is the development of character. Character building is described as the development of good habits such as the ability to be still and self-aware, to attend to the present moment, to participate in the spirit of enquiry and to unite with others around. These habits of attention, enquiry, stillness and unity will provide the foundations for academic excellence, a life of meaningful purpose and a life journey of Self-Discovery.

Mindfulness along with philosophy and meditation are considered the three key aspects in the journey of character building and the development of these habits. The mindful motto of the school is "Delight in the present" and the belief is that when a child comes to know their true Self it is possible to delight in the present every moment of every day.

1. Introduction:

John Scottus Senior School is committed to providing access to a broad and balanced curriculum for all children and enabling children to make use of the educational facilities. In accordance with the NCCA Guidelines, John Scottus Senior School aims to enable students to realise their full potential and to work as independently as possible. In order to achieve this goal some of our students may require supplementary teaching, additional resources, classroom support or the provision of specialised equipment. In all cases it is the intention to integrate students socially and academically.

2. Definition

The Education for Special Needs Act (2004) defines "special education needs":

A restriction in the capacity of a person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently than a person without that condition.

The students who fall within the Special Needs definition include

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- Pupils with learning difficulties and disorders
- Pupils with physical and sensory disabilities
- Pupils with emotional and behavioural disorders
- Pupils with other special needs

3. The Special Needs Team

The Special Needs Team comprises the Special Needs Co-ordinator, Learning Support Teachers, Resource Teachers and Special Needs Assistants. The School Guidance Department may also be involved in this team. The Special Needs Co-ordinator is responsible for the managing and organising of learning support and resource teaching under the direction of the Principal and Deputy Principal

4. Identification and Assessment

Parents are required to forward information on special needs including Psychological Reports in the academic year before the year of entry of a student. The School is allocated additional teaching hours by the Department of Education on the basis of the Psychological Report. For incoming students who have been identified with having special needs, staff meet parents and students to build a picture of the individual, their strengths and learning difficulties. The Special Needs Co-ordinator meets with primary school teachers as part of the assessment process. Students entering first year are formally assessed in September using standardised tests.

Pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties need to be assessed by outside agencies to identify on-going needs and to develop the necessary teaching strategies.

5. Provision

Learning support provision is seen in the context of a whole school approach. The Special Needs Team takes primary responsibility for learning support provision and provides information to subject teachers as necessary. The aim of each teacher is to develop the individual student to his/her full potential. In addition to this:

- The Special Needs Team will endeavour to provide appropriate levels of support for pupils as part of the whole school approach.
- number of pupils will be allocated to learning support class(es).
- Pupils with learning difficulties will be withdrawn in small groups or individually where the timetable permits.
- Support teachers may offer learning support in the classroom.
- The Special Needs Team under the direction of the Co-ordinator will liaise with Class Teachers, Cycle Heads and subject teachers to discuss, where necessary, specific difficulties experienced within the classroom.
- A student with special needs may be exempt from the study of certain subjects. This will occur following consultation between the Year Head and parents/guardians.

The level of support provided to a pupil with special needs will be based on the resources allocated from the Department of Education and Skills for that pupil and on an assessment of the needs of that pupil undertaken by the Special Needs Co-ordinator.

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Parents/guardians should be aware that, as a general rule, students are not withdrawn from any timetabled classes for learning support. Where it is judged appropriate that this should happen, it will not be possible to make good topics missed as a result of absence from a class.

A number of special accommodations are available for students with special educational needs. These include provision of grants to purchase assistive technology, accommodations in certificate examinations, and exemption from the study of Irish.

6. Communication

A tracking/communication system operates in the School. This includes:

- School and home liaison. The home/school partnership for students with special needs is of considerable importance.
- School and home liaison with outside agencies, e.g. psychologists, speech/language therapists, visiting teachers etc.
- On-going communication with subject teachers/class teachers/Cycle Heads/Deputy Principal/Principal, including the sharing of relevant information regarding students with special needs through the internal school IT network.
- An Individual Education Plan is created by the student, parents and appropriate members of the Special Needs Team. It is reviewed in an annual meeting.

7. Role of Principal / Deputy Principal

- Oversee the development of the Special Educational Needs Policy
- Inform teachers and Staff of incoming students with Special Educational Needs
- Overall responsibility for the Learning Support Programme and the operation of services for students with special education needs
- Overall responsibility for supporting teachers to create Individual Education Plans for students with special education needs
- Overall responsibility for creating and/or supporting teachers to create Student Profiles for all students
- Provide accommodation and resources for students with Special Educational Needs
- Work with Board of Management, Staff and Parents (Guardians) to develop a whole school plan for Learning Support and Special Educational Needs.
- Monitor the implementation of the Learning Support Programme and the selection of students for learning support
- Provide staff development for teachers in methodologies for learning support
- Make applications to the DES for resources for students with special needs

8. Role of Special Needs Co-ordinator

The Special Needs Co-ordinator is responsible for the Special Needs Team and for ensuring the provision of special needs support for all pupils identified as having special education needs. The Co-ordinator will:

- Seek to identify students with specific learning difficulties
- Make applications to the Department of Education for special needs assistants
- Read, interpret and disseminate information from psychological reports
- Work with parents, form teachers, subject teachers and outside agencies to develop and implement an Individual Learning Plan for each student
- Carry out continuous assessment of students

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- Source resources and assistive technology for students
- Organise reasonable accommodations for certificate examinations
- Advise students on further education options including the CAO and the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) supplementary admissions scheme for school leavers with disabilities which offers some places on a reduced points basis

9. Special Needs Assistants (SNA)

The Special Needs Assistant is employed to assist pupils in an academic context within the classroom and in the area of social education outside the classroom. SNA duties are assigned by the Principal and are the following:

- Preparation and tidying up of classroom
- Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks, examinations and similar activities
- Helping special needs pupils with writing, typing or computers or use of other equipment
- Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting, and being mindful of health and safety of students
- Accompanying individuals or small groups who have been withdrawn temporarily from the classroom
- General assistance to class teachers
- Participation with school development planning
- Communicate with parents of special needs pupils in both formal meetings and informally through regular emails and phone calls.
- Special Needs Assistants may be assigned other work when special needs pupils are absent

10. Role of Student

The Student is required to attend their Individual Planning Meeting at the start of every new school year. The meetings take place as early as possible during the first term (see SEN. Department Procedures). Students have the opportunity to set targets for themselves and develop plans for behaviour, class work, homework, study and tests. It is important that the student takes ownership of the plan. In some cases the student may sign a contract and may achieve rewards for meeting the targets set out in their plan.

11. Role of Parent

Parents are central to developing and monitoring Individual Education Plans. Parents help to set targets for managing homework, study, organisation, communication, social skills and behaviour.

Approved by the Board of Management, John Scottus School, June 2017