**Introduction**

Scoil Íosa N.S. currently has thirteen classroom teachers, six SET teachers, one shared SET teacher based in Scoil Íosa (22.5hrs in Scoil Íosa and 3hrs in Knock N.S), one permanent EAL Teacher, one Fixed Term EAL teacher and one Alleviation post for Travelers. The school also currently has the service of Four full time Special Needs Assistants, caring for seven pupils with special needs. The current enrolment is made up of more than twenty different nationalities making up over 60% of the school population, most of whom have no exposure to English language outside of the school setting. The school also has a large number of pupils from the Traveler community currently making up circa 12% of our total enrolment.

**Rationale**

This policy was revised in response to the recommendations associated with the WSE/MLL which the school underwent in October 2017. It attempts to address the significant changes associated with the revised approach to SEN introduced by the DES in 2016 particularly in relation to utilising the NEPS Continuum of Support. The policy was formulated in cooperation with the school community including the Principal, Class Teachers and all Learning Support personnel. It comes as the result of a comprehensive review of SET provisions in the school carried out as the focus of School Self evaluation over the 2018/2019 school year. All interested parents are given access to the policy through its availability in school or on the school website..

**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide effective learning support to pupils experiencing low achievement, learning and English language difficulties, as well as to fulfill our obligations under the Education Act 1998.

**Organisation of Learning Support Teachers.**

In order to promote efficiency in our learning support provision the support teachers are assigned to particular year groups. The assigned teacher is timetabled to provide Learning Support, Resource and EAL intervention in the year groups to which they are assigned. As of the 2017 -2018 school year the provisional assignment of teachers is as follows:

* Olivia Burke: Junior and Senior Infants.
* Miriam Judge: Junior and Senior Infants.
* Aishling Toal: EAL/Maths Support
* Sheena Flanagan (Tara Cusack): Infants - Second Classes.
* Annie Kelly First – Third Classes
* Kevin Henry: (LS/RT Coordinator) Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Classes and Third Class Maths
* Caroline Campbell Allocation from all classes (Monday & Thursday)
* Samantha Cleary Third – Fifth & Fifth/Sixth Class

In addition, Learning Support teachers assigned to infant classes may be required to assist in the provision of EAL support and Traveler support from 2:00 p.m to 2:55 p.m daily, after infant pupils have departed.

Intervention time is currently a combination of withdrawal of pupils and in class learning support provision. With reference to in - class intervention this involves a combination of Team Teaching activities coupled with station teaching. Presently, in class intervention is at the discretion of the individual teachers and on a pilot basis. Our target is to achieve an average of 50% in class learning support by the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

**Aims of Learning Support / Resource Teaching**

* To optimize the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning weaknesses/difficulties to achieve adequate and appropriate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.
* To enable pupils with low achievement and/or learning difficulties to participate in the full curriculum for their class level.
* To develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in these pupils.
* To provide supplementary teaching and additional support and resources for these pupils in English and/or Mathematics.
* To enable these pupils to become independent learners.
* To establish early intervention programmes and other programmes designed to enhance learning and to prevent/reduce difficulties in learning.
* To promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of whole school policies on learning support for these pupils.
* To involve parents in supporting their children’s learning.

**Principles of Learning Support/Resource Teaching**

The school recognizes that effective learning programmes are based on the following principles:

♦ Effective whole-school policies and parental support.

♦ Prevention of failure.

♦ Provision of intensive and appropriate early intervention.

♦Direction of resources towards pupils with greatest needs.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

Effective learning support/resource teaching requires a high level of collaboration and consultation involving the Principal, class teachers, learning support teachers/resource teachers/EAL teachers, parents, The Board of Management – where appropriate, relevant professionals and pupils. It is important that everybody contributes in the planning and implementation of the school plan on supporting learning.

## Principal Teacher

* The principal in cooperation /collaboration with the learning Support coordinator has overall responsibility for organising the school’s Learning Support/Resource/EAL Programme and for the operation of services for children with special educational needs.
* Works with teachers and parents in the development of the school plan on learning support/resource/EAL.
* Monitors the implementation of school policy on learning support/resource/EAL on an ongoing basis and includes learning support/resource on agenda of staff meetings where appropriate.
* Keeps teachers informed about the external assessment services that are available and the procedures to be followed in initiating referrals.
* Arranges for classroom accommodation and resources as appropriate.
* Monitors screening processes and the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, ensuring that this service is focused on the pupils with very low achievement, high incidence and low incidence disabilities.

## Role of Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in the class including those selected for supplementary teaching. In supporting the development and implementation of school policy on learning support/ resource/EAL, the class teacher:

* Implements school policy on screening and in cooperation with the relevant Learning Support teacher/LS Coordinator selects pupils for supplementary teaching in English and Mathematics
* For each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching, collaborate with learning support/resource teacher in the development of suitable learning programmes for the pupils. In terms of pupils receiving resource hours this should include collaboration with parents, visiting teachers, NEPS, Early intervention services , support teachers and the Principal in devising the IEP for the pupils.
* Differentiate the class curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of all pupils in the class. With regard to teaching pupils with low achievement, the following general methods are recommended:
  + *Group teaching*
  + *Modifying presentation and questioning techniques to maximize the involvement of all pupils in the class*
  + *Placing emphasis on oral language development across the curriculum*
  + *Providing learning activities and materials which are suitably challenging but which also ensure success and achievement.*
  + *Instigate station teaching activities promoting collaborative learning/Cooperative learning in the classroom*

###### Role of Learning Support/Resource Teacher

The activities of the learning support/resource teacher should include:

* Assisting in the implementation of a broad range of whole-school strategies designed to enhance early learning and to prevent learning difficulties
* Maintaining a monthly/weekly planning and progress record for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of Learning Support/Resource. This is forwarded to the Principal monthly as the Cúntas Míosuil.
* Delivering intensive early intervention programmes and providing supplementary teaching in English and /or Mathematics to pupils in the junior section of the school when timetable hours permit.
* Providing supplementary teaching in English or Mathematics to pupils in the Senior Section of the school who experience low achievement and /or learning difficulties.
* Coordinating the implementation of whole-school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching, in line with the selection criteria specified and input from the pupils’ class teachers and parents.
* Contributing to the development of policy on learning support
* Contributing at the school level to the decision - making regarding the purchase of learning resources, books and materials to be made available to pupils with learning difficulties in their mainstream classrooms, in the support library and in the learning support/resource teacher’s room.

*Role of Parent*

* To support and participate in their child’s learning.
* To meet with class teacher and / or LS teacher and to cooperate in the setting of educational targets.

*Role of Pupil*

It is important for the students to have an input into the development, implementation and review of their own learning. By doing so they can:

* Develop as independent learners.
* Become aware of their learning style.
* Become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses or needs
* Enjoy success and evaluate their progress.
* Participate fully in the curriculum.
* Maintain good self esteem.
* Recognise the value of learning support as assisting all pupils with learning through in class learning support participation and actively contributing to station teaching activities.

*Role of Board of Management*

* To oversee implementation and review of the Learning Support policy and the provision of adequate resources, accommodation and storage.
* To act in a supportive role to ensure all provisions and resources are in place to implement a successful learning support intervention policy.

**Prevention Strategies, Early identification and Parental Involvement**

Scoil Íosa N. S. recognizes the importance of having appropriate prevention/early intervention strategies in place for providing effective and appropriate learning support. In achieving this every effort is made to engage with parents at the earliest opportunity to discuss their childrens needs. In attempting to achieve this, the following strategies are utilised:

* Identifying information from enrolment forms which may indicate difficulties at a later stage – slow to reach recognized milestones / language acquisition and development / attending speech therapy prior to starting school.
* Noting observations and possible concerns of parents at parent teacher meetings.
* Implementing appropriate whole school programmes in English and Mathematics.
* Development of agreed approaches to language development and to teaching other aspects of English and Mathematics in order to ensure progression and continuity from class to class.
* Provision of additional support in language development/EAL and in early literacy and Mathematical skills to all pupils.
* Encouraging parent involvement focusing on developing children’s oral language skills, sharing books with children, and developing their early Mathematical skills.
* Implementing a paired reading programme where pupils from senior classes engage with and assist junior pupils with reading.
* Utilising Transition Year students from Ballyhaunis Community School to implement a reading literacy programme on a weekly basis. Progress sheets are utilised to assist with this programme.
* Ongoing informal observation and assessment by the class teacher , of the language, literacy and numeracy skills of pupils in the Infant classes to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties.
* Providing in class support for all Infant classes including the introduction of station teaching supported by learning support/resource teachers.
* Inclusion of Middle Infant Screening Test to highlight difficulties during the final term for senior infants and providing intervention to those who require it.
* Ongoing consultation between class teachers / learning support teachers and principal regarding individual needs of pupils.
* Formal and informal Parent/Teacher meetings

**Early Intervention Programme**

Following implementation of prevention strategies, pupils will be selected by class teacher and learning support/resource teacher to receive intensive small group teaching where such is deemed necessary. Below is a summary of course content that could be included in the intervention programme.

* Phonemic awareness
* Letter recognition
* Sequencing of alphabet / days of the week
* Sight vocabulary
* Supporting class reading
* Handwriting skills
* 7 aspects oral language development through use of Big Books
* Listening
* Naming
* Categorising
* Describing
* Denoting position
* Sequencing
* Reasoning and planning
* Retelling a story

**Criteria for Selection of Pupils to Receive Supplementary Teaching.**

In the allocation of places for Learning Support, the following are prioritized:

* Children who have been defined as having a low incidence disability or a high incidence disability will be given the recommended time allocation for SET hours wherever possible. Any student who has been assessed by a psychologist and has had a recommendation of supplementary/resource hours will be given priority.
* Priority will be given to pupils who are performing at or below the 10th percentile in a standardised test of English.
* Early intervention in the Junior classes - especially Infants
* Pupils performing at or below the 10th percentile in a standardised test of Mathematics.
* Support for children presenting with difficulties in literacy and /or numeracy scoring above the 10th percentile. These may be pupils with specific areas of weakness such as spelling /oral language skills / handwriting / comprehension. (as time allocation allows)
* Pupils displaying dyslexic tendencies are monitored especially where there is a known family history of dyslexia.
* Senior Infants/First Class - early intervention programmes for low achievers in Mathematics based on class teacher’s observations and recommendations
* Currently the school has a quota of three pupils per annum, receiving assessment by the NEPS Educational Psychologist. As such, at Scoil Íosa we refer priority cases, with these cases initially being identified in the junior cycle (Junior Infants to First Class).Such pupils are then monitored by the class teachers and learning support personnel with the Principal being informed of the situation. Usually these assessments take place when pupils are in first or second class, depending on the priority/urgency of the cases. In urgent cases assessments may take place in Infant classes once the need has been established and discussed with parents.
* There will be some flexibility to provide for children who are not in the 10th percentile but require supplementary teaching. This will be dependent on available time table slots and overall caseload.
* Supplementary teaching is not intended to remove discipline problems from the classroom unless the relevant pupils are in receipt of resource hours for an assessed condition contributing to poor/unacceptable behaviour or the pupils behaviour is such that the normal operation of the class is compromised and the rights of the pupils are being impeded. In such cases, the Principal may decide to withdraw the pupil for a cooling off period in consultation with the Learning support teacher, the class teacher and the parents.

**Procedure Following Screening**

*Identification of children needing support (including resource hours)*

Children who have been identified as having the greatest need e.g. high/low incidence of disability and have been assigned resource hours

* Preliminary screening which involves the administration and interpretation of screening measures by the class teacher. (Micra T and Sigma T)
* Selection for diagnostic assessment, which involves consultation between the class teacher and parents and consultation between the class teacher and learning support teacher. Parents will have signed a permission slip to allow for testing on enrolment of their son/daughter
* Diagnostic assessment, which involves the administration of diagnostic tests by the learning support teacher who discusses the outcomes with the classroom teacher. These teachers then consider of the most appropriate form of intervention for the pupil.
* Programme planning where there is contact between the support teacher and the parents. This takes the form of a standard letter to parents advising them that their child will require learning support intervention and requesting their signature to allow for this. Following on from this communication, the parent may wish to meet with the class teacher and/or the learning support teacher to discuss concerns.
* The support teacher may develops an IPLP in consultation with the pupil’s class teacher and parents should the need be established. If the child is included as a member of a group receiving support the general monthly progress report may suffice.
* Programme implementation where the classroom teacher makes appropriate modification of teaching approaches. The learning support teacher makes a supplementary teaching provision for an appropriate period of time. It is policy that the pupil in question may require minimal intervention and may benefit from appropriately differentiated teaching or in class intervention rather than from withdrawal, particularly in senior classes.
* Programme Review is made at the end of the instructional period where there is an assessment of the pupil’s progress and an evaluation of the learning programme. There is consultation between the learning support teacher, class teacher and parents and a decision is made with regard to the level of support now required by the pupil.
* A decision is made to discontinue supplementary teaching or continue supplementary teaching for a further term

**The Learning Support teacher meets parents to:**

* Discuss the results of diagnostic assessment
* Discuss the setting of learning targets for the pupil. This may necessitate formulating an IPLP.
* Discuss the actions to be taken by the school to meet those targets
* Suggest ways in which attainment of those targets can be supported at home
* Answer any queries and address any concerns the parent may have.

**Note:** ***In cases where the parents do not agree to permit their child to attend learning support or where parents withdraw permission, this must be forwarded to the school in writing. A copy of such communication will be kept in the relevant pupils file and also in the Principals office.***

**Assessment and Reporting (See school policy on assessment)**

# Provision of Supplementary Teaching

* The primary work of the Learning Support Teacher is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils identified above.
* A system of withdrawal and/or in-class support will operate in response to the needs of the pupils.
* The Learning Support Teacher decides the size of groups, taking into account the individual needs of pupils and the overall caseload.
* One to one teaching may be provided where small group teaching has not been effective and caseload permits, predominantly in the case of children receiving resource hours..

The Class Teachers and the Learning Support Teachers meet regularly to evaluate Individual Learning Programmes (ILP) and/or Group Education Learning Programmes. This may be on a formal or on an informal basis.

# Individual Learning Programme and Group Learning Programme

An IPLP may be drawn up by the learning support/resource teacher in conjunction with the class teacher, parents and principalto target the pupil’s needs.

The individual learning plan/group learning plan will be in accordance with the criteria as advised in the Learning Support Guidelines. The plan will address the pupils’ full range of needs and may include:

* Details from Class Teacher
* Assessment results
* Other relevant information, e.g. reports from other agencies
* Learning strengths and attainments
* Priority learning needs
* Learning targets
* Class-based learning activities
* Supplementary support activities to include ICT
* Home support activities
* Resources are matched to child’s needs and listed in programme
* Review and assessment dates are documented.

Each plan will be monitored through teacher observation, the keeping of planning and progress records and through the pupil’s own feedback.

The Learning Support Teacher and/or Class Teacher may meet parents to discuss the child’s progress as the need arises.

# Provision of Resources

Resources for the provision of learning support include a variety of textbooks, library books and ancillary materials in addition to oral language development materials and fluency development materials. Where appropriate it is intended that the materials utilised by the support teachers will correlate with the textbooks/programmes utilised in the various classrooms, for example in Infant/lower junior classes much of the literacy materials will support the Jolly Phonics Programme or the Oxford Reading Tree individualized reading programme in use in the school.

A variety of testing materials are also in use which include standardised, diagnostic screening, reading attainment, phonological awareness and Math’s attainment. These are outlined in the Scoil Íosa assessment policy.

## **Continuing and Discontinuing Supplementary Teaching**

In general children should not stay for more than two years in Supplementary Teaching unless they are still at or below the 10th percentile.

Following the end of instructional term, a decision is made to continue /discontinue the provision of supplementary teaching.

The criteria on which this decision is made include:

* Has the pupil achieved some/all of the learning targets set?
* Will the pupil be able to cope in the classroom learning context?

A decision to continue the provision of supplementary teaching will result in a revision of the pupil’s ILP.

The decision-making process will involve consultation between the Class Teacher, Learning Support Teacher in cooperation/consultation with parents. Account will also be taken of the overall learning support demands in the school.

**Liaising with Parents/Guardians**

Consultation with parents prior to diagnostic assessment is standard practice and further discussion regarding the results is necessary to ascertain the areas needing attention and implementation of IPLP where such occurs.

Guidance can also be given prior to testing to parents/guardians by the learning support /resource teacher. This may include information/discussion sessions on such topics as:

1. The purpose and procedures of the school learning support/resource service.
2. Paired reading programme.
3. Developing children’s oral reading language.
4. Motivating children to read more.
5. Creating a home environment in which literacy can thrive.
6. Helping children with homework.
7. Selecting books that interest children.
8. Developing children’s reasoning and problem solving abilities.
9. Developing children’s mathematical knowledge.

*Parents are encouraged to contact the learning support/resource teacher if any difficulties arise during an instructional term and to attend any meetings at the end of an instructional term to review their children’s progress in achieving learning targets.*

If it is decided that supplementary teaching is to continue parents are invited to discuss revised learning targets and activities.

## **Communication Strategies**

### The operation of an effective communication system between all parties involved in meeting the learning needs of the child is considered essential.

The various strands of this system include:

* Meeting parents of Junior Infant children to explain school policies and how parents and teachers can work together for the benefit of pupils. This generally occurs during the course of the Junior Infant induction afternoon held at the end of the school year.
* Informing parents of concerns regarding progress in school.
* Outlining the school’s practice with regard to diagnostic testing and follow up procedures.
* Consultation between Class teacher and Learning Support teacher following a low score on a screening test
* Consultation between Principal and/or Learning Support teacher and/or Class teacher and parents following a low score on a screening test, including the seeking of approval for diagnostic assessment and provision of supplementary teaching
* Ongoing communication between the LST and the class teacher
* Regular communication between the LST and parents in the form of notes /comments written into pupil’s copybook.
* Copies of checklists sent home – such as sight vocabulary lists indicating words recognized and words requiring more practice.

**Links with Outside Agencies**

The school will liaise with any outside agencies in agreement with parents that will support and assist the learning of pupils these include

* NEPS for psychological assessment
* Safari Club early intervention service in association with Western Care (Castlebar)
* HSE Speech and Language Therapists
* HSE Social Workers
* A representative from Post Primary Schools to discuss transfer of 6th class pupils with Special Educational Needs. Meeting takes place usually in summer term.

# Referral to Out-of-school Agencies

* The Principal in consultation with the class teachers and LST co-ordinates the referral of pupils to outside agencies, e.g. NEPS Educational Psychologist, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Social Workers etc.
* The Principal and/or LST and/or Class Teacher meet with the parents to discuss the need for the referral and to seek consent.
* The class teacher completes the necessary referral form in consultation with the appropriate school personnel.
* The external professional visits the school to meet with the pupil, parents, principal, class teacher and the LST as appropriate and assessment is conducted.
* This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed.
* Where concern arises regarding the manner or speed of the follow–through post assessment, such concern is pursued by the Principal with the out-of-school agency.

## **RESOURCE TEACHING POLICY**

## **Rationale**

The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other relevant persons on the provision of effective teaching support for children experiencing a learning disability or any special needs and to fulfill our obligations under the Education Act 1998.

### Definition of Special Needs

We understand Special Needs to be that as defined in D.E.S. circulars. Interventions with pupils will be delivered in a manner that best meets the needs identified, which may be through group or individual teaching.

# Identification and Selection of Children with Special Needs

Concerns about children may arise in a number of ways:

* Parents inform the principal or class teacher of a concern they have regarding their child.
* Teachers may have a concern regarding a child in their class.
* Concerns may arise following standardised testing.
* School is informed by early intervention services of issues prior to enrolment.

### Procedures to be followed

* Having consulted with the teacher and parents involved, the Principal will seek appropriate assessment through the N.E.P.S. with a view to qualifying for support from the Resource Teacher.
* In the situation where parents refuse to grant consent for their child to attend for either a psychological assessment or learning support, a record of the offer and its rejection should be kept in the child’s file. This must be signed by the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child.
* The Education Welfare Act 2000 authorises the Board of Management with the consent of the parent of a child to arrange for a child to be assessed as to his or her intellectual, emotional and physical development by such a person as may be determined by the Board with the concurrence of the parent.(Section 10-4)
* Where a parent refuses to give consent the Board may apply to the Circuit Court for an order that an assessment of the child be carried out.(Section 10-5)

### Aims of Special Needs Teaching

The aims of the Special Needs Teaching are:

* To support as far as possible the integration of the child with special needs into the mainstream setting.
* To develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in the child.
* To promote collaboration among the staff in the implementation of the whole school policies on special needs.
* To put conditions in place to facilitate access to the curriculum in a complete manner as possible for pupils with special educational needs.

**Individual Education Plans (I.E.P)**

Individual education plans are completed for all pupils in receipt of resource teaching hours as granted by the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO). Such plans are pertinent to the individual pupils and are formulated for a prescribed amount of time after which the plans are renewed, modified or continued in their present form. I.E.Ps are collaborative planning documents involving input from a number of personnel including Resource Teachers, Learning Support Coordinator, Parents and other relevant personnel. The plans are specific and are geared to individual pupils.

### Role of the Resource Teacher

The role of the resource teacher is to provide support for children with special needs by:

* Developing an individual learning programme for each pupil in consultation with other partners in education.
* Assessing and recording the child’s needs and progress.
* Setting specific time-related targets for each child and agreeing these with the class teacher and principal.
* Direct teaching of the child, either in a separate room or within the mainstream class.
* Advising class teachers in regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, text books, I.C.T. and other related matters.
* Meeting and advising parents when necessary, accompanied by the class teacher as necessary.
* Meeting with relevant professionals in the child’s interest e.g. psychologists, speech and language therapists and visiting teachers.
* To develop individual education plans for pupils with special needs and for pupils in receipt of resource teaching hours in co-operation with the LS Co – ordinator class teachers, parents and educational professionals including occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and other relevant personnel.
* To oversee the implementation of IEPs and in co-operation with the Principal and LS coordinator to undertake review and revision of such plans as necessary.

### Timetabling

* The provision of special needs teaching is in addition to regular teaching.
* Time allocated per child will depend on the demands on the service and the hours authorised by the SENO.
* Every effort will be made to ensure that pupils do not miss out on the same curricular area each time they attend except where a pupil has been exempted from a subject by the DES.
* Likewise the school will endeavour to ensure that pupils do not miss classes they particularly enjoy such as Art, P.E. or Computer. This also applies to pupils attending Learning Support.

# Role of the Class Teacher, Parents, Principal and Board of Management

The role of all the above in the education of children who have allocated resource teaching is as in the preceding section, i.e. the section on Learning Support.

**Ratified by Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(Date)**

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Principal Learning Support Coordinating Teacher**

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**Chairperson Board of Management.**

**This policy will be reviewed every three years and will be updated annually to reflect appropriate allocations of resource teaching hours and teaching roles of pertinent personnel.**