



St. Fergus National School, Glin

Roll Number 20102T

Inclusion Policy

October 2023

Rational

This policy is in keeping with

- The Education Act 1998
- The Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004
- The Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2004
- Circular 14/2017 (New Model of Allocation) and the corresponding Guidelines for Post Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (2017)
- The NEPS Continuum of Support.

St. Fergus National School, is an inclusive school and no student will be refused admission on discriminatory grounds as referred to in our Admissions Policy. No person in the school will be discriminated against on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, physical or intellectual disability or other special educational needs, race, Traveller community. This list is not exhaustive.

St. Fergus N.S. Ethos, Mission Statement, Philosophy and Aims

School Ethos:

We aim to provide a safe and healthy environment where each child can develop and learn to his/her full potential. We welcome each child as individuals and will strive to care for him/her in every way that we can.

Mission Statement:

St. Fergus' National School is a school which endeavours to enable the child to develop his/her own potential. The individuality of each child is valued. We want each child to become an independent and worthwhile member of society. This is to be achieved in a safe and happy environment, in a spirit of caring for ourselves and our neighbours. St. Fergus' National School embraces the Catholic tradition and respects the faiths, beliefs and traditions of all faiths.

School Philosophy and Aims

The school exists for the pupil. While acknowledging that the Primary and natural Educators of the child are the Parents, the School provides a moral, intellectual and social education to enable the child to live a full life and to equip the child to avail of further education so that he/she may live a full and useful life as an adult in Society.

Introduction

St. Fergus NS aspires to be a responsibly inclusive school. The principles of inclusivity and respect are enshrined in the School, Ethos, Mission Statement, Philosophy and Aims. Responsible inclusion means working towards what is best for the student. To have responsible inclusion, St. Fergus' NS has a curriculum, which includes all aspects of education in school life, (hidden, implied, social skills, life skills, extra –curricular activities etc.) and that considers curriculum as a process and education as development of students rather than content and product.

Inherent in this is an understanding that individual needs or learning differences should not prevent a student from flourishing in St. Fergus NS. It is our aspiration that if a child is assessed or diagnosed as needing support, they will receive whatever assistance they require to enable them to reach their full potential. We expect the full support of the Department of Education and Skills (financial and resource wise) to allow us to fulfil this aspiration. This will involve a whole-school approach to supporting the child with individual needs.

Aims

St. Fergus' NS aims to:-

- Ensure that students with individual needs are educated in a responsibly inclusive environment.
- Ensure that students with special educational needs 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.
- Give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children who have a disability or who have other special educational needs, as they relate to education.
- Provide, in line with the new model of allocation, a level and quality of education appropriate to the needs and abilities of all students in the School.
- Affirm that students with special educational needs have the same right to avail of, and benefit from, education as students who do not have those needs.
- Provide for the involvement of parents in the education of their children and in the decision-making process in relation to the children.
- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at school and at home.
- Acknowledge the primary responsibility of the classroom teacher and work to support them in meeting the needs of the student.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Ensure that students with individual needs are offered a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum and they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the individual needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.
- Ensure that special educational needs are not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole School and community.
- 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 special educational needs.
- Co-ordinate the advice, guidance and support of other agencies, including the staff of St. Fergus' NS, in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Provide programmes that meet the individual needs of a student. These programmes may include but are not exclusively, Braille and PECS.

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- Ensure that where appropriate, students can achieve the learning outcomes and intentions of their individual programmes in the mainstream class.
- Set high standards for students with special educational needs and provide them with appropriate guidance, encouraging them to achieve their full potential.
- Ensure the effective and efficient use of resources.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of practice in support of students with special educational needs.

Categories of SEN

All students attending St. Fergus' NS are unique. Some students attending St. Fergus' NS have a variety of individual needs. We aspire to put the student and not the need first. These needs may include (but are not restricted to) the following:-

- Physical Disability For example, hearing or visual impairment, wheelchair user, epilepsy, diabetes, cystic fibrosis and co-ordination difficulties
- Emotional/Behavioural Disability While some of these students can present challenges, (e.g. ADHD other disabilities can apply) with the right support and/or medication the students can thrive in a "mainstream" environment.
- Specific Learning Difficulty
 - Dyslexia : Difficulty with language
 - Hyperlexia: Difficulty with comprehension
 - Dyscalculia: Difficulty with numbers
 - Dysgraphia: Difficulty with writing
- General Learning Disability (GLD)

Students can present with Borderline Mild, Mild, Moderate or Severe and Profound General Learning Disability. Teachers of students with GLD can access a variety of teaching tools and advice from the SEN Team, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Guidelines for students with GLD and the Special Education Support Services (SESS).

- Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Many students on the Autistic Spectrum when supported can succeed and exceed expectations in the responsibly inclusive environment of St. Fergus' NS.

Roles and Responsibility For Inclusion in St. Fergus' NS

There are many people who hold roles and responsibilities for Inclusion in St. Fergus' NS, including;

- the Student with SEN
- Parents
- the Board of Management
- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Special Education Teachers (SET)
- Mainstream Teachers
- SNAs
- Outside-supporting agencies

1. The Student

Students have a critical role to play in the development and evaluation of their own learning. The Student can:

- Become more independent as learners and are encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning.
- Become successful as learners and better able to develop skills and strategies to maximise their own learning and to become critical thinkers.
- Become more aware of different teaching and learning styles – Metacognition.
- Contribute to the development of their educational plan.
- Become more aware of the importance and value of working co-operatively with others.
- Engage to their ability in the life of St. Fergus' NS.
- Achieve at their potential.

2. Parents/Guardian

Where the word “parent” is used, it is understood to refer also to “guardian” if appropriate. The effectiveness of any assessment or intervention will be crucially influenced by the involvement of the student’s parents as per the Department Education Act 1998, ‘the parent is the primary educator’.

- Parents will access information through contacting the school (class teacher initially) regarding SEN and the Additional Support Policy

<https://www.stfergusns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Additional-Support-Policy-Jan2020.pdf>

and this Inclusion Policy.

- Parents have a central role to play in the drawing up of Classroom Support/School Support/School Support Plus Plans
- Throughout the year further updates and details will be communicated to parents. In return parents are expected to keep the School updated with developments from their perspective by contacting their child's class teacher or SET. They are also expected to work closely with the SEN team to make their child's learning experience as positive as possible.
- Parents are encouraged to attend all meetings in school where they obtain further information from the SET regarding their child's progress.
- Permission in writing is sought from parents if a student is to be assessed with a view to receiving SET and/or referral to NEPS or other agencies. . A meeting is arranged to discuss the assessment/SET, reasons the assessment/SET is being sought, with a view to creating and developing and reviewing an educational plan.
- Parents are expected to support the work of the school with the student and to ensure the correct use and maintenance of any aids or equipment that are provided for the student
- Parents are invited to contact the class/support teacher during the year in addition to meeting the SETs and Class Teachers at Parent/Teacher meetings.

3. Board of Management

Ultimate responsibility for the education of children with individual needs in St. Fergus' NS rests with the Board of Management.

The Board and the Principal acting on its behalf will:

- Work with the staff and SEN team to monitor the implementation of the Inclusion Policy and the SEN programme on an on-going basis to ensure best practice.
- Promote a whole-school approach to special educational provision.
- Will also appoint various staff to operate the programme

4. Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the School's policies.

The Principal will:

- Sanction exemption from Gaeilge as requested. In relation to this please see Minister of Education's instruction to Management in the following link:

https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-andForms/ActiveCirculars/ppc10_94.pdf

<https://www.stfergusns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Irish-Exemption-Policy-February-2020.pdf>

- Ensure adequate timetabling of hours for educational support.
- Facilitate meetings of, and in-service training for the teachers of pupils with Special Educational Needs.

5. Special Educational Needs Team

The Special Educational Needs Team (Special Education Teachers and Teachers in ASD Classes) will have overall responsibility for the management of the daily operations of the SET and ASD Classes. Practical and administrative duties attached to the post are included in Appendix A. These duties are reviewed regularly and may change to ensure the priorities of the SEN team are addressed. The special roles and responsibilities of personnel are as described in the DES publication, "Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools"

<http://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/inline-files/Guidelines-for-Primary-Schools-Supporting-Pupils-with-Special-Educational-Needs-in-Mainstream-Schools.pdf>

The Principal, Deputy Principal have a role in this team also:

Their role is to:-

- Support the SEN team.
- Identify students with need of support.
- Assist with testing.
- Communicate with parents.
- Communicate with Board of Management.
- Communicate with School staff.
- Refer to outside agencies.

6. Mainstream Class Teachers

The mainstream class teacher has a key role in bringing about the successful inclusion of students with special educational needs in their classes. The class teacher has primary responsibility for the educational progress of all students in his/her class. It is particularly important that all class teachers create a class room environment that accommodates and takes account of learning and physical difficulties. It is expected that teachers will implement differentiated approaches to teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that the skills of all students, including students with SEN are developed. Mainstream teachers will make themselves aware of the special educational needs of students in their classes. Attainment levels in literacy and numeracy plus SSP/SSP+ are available to all class teachers for their pupils through Aladdin. Teachers take steps to inform themselves of the special needs of any student in their classes and to bring any new concerns regarding students to the Special Educational Needs Team.

The class teacher also plays an important role in the early identification of students with SEN. They alert to the possibility of general and specific learning difficulties and will bring their concerns to the attention of the Special Education Teacher (SET) team. A key element of successful provision for students with SEN is a high level of consultation and co-operation between the class teacher and the SET team. The academic progress of students through the School rests in the first instance with the mainstream class teacher. In order to ensure that, as a

school, we meet the needs of all our special educational needs students, all teachers are encouraged to:-

- Be aware of the School's policy and procedures for dealing with students with SEN
- Seek advice from the SETs regarding students with SEN
- Take responsibility for their own continuous professional development particularly with regard to common difficulties, e.g. Dyslexia
- Develop an attitude of ownership to the education of students in their classes with SEN
- Plan how to most effectively engage the SNA, where relevant, in consultation with the SETs
- Support/encourage independence in the student; this is particularly important for pupils at the senior end of the school.

7. Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

Where it is recommended by an outside or supporting agent and agreed by parents that SNA support is required, an application will be made by the Principal to the SENO (Special Education Needs Organiser) with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). If granted, an SNA will cater for the care needs and particular non-educational difficulties of this student. The SNA will provide assistance, as required, which could be in the area of student organisation, extra-curricular activities, helping teachers in the supervision of students with SEN, or helping students to become more independent and self-reliant. Students are granted Access to SNA support and this could mean that the number of students in receipt of Access to SNA support can be greater than the number of SNAs allocated to the school. In this case the Principal must assign SNA Access based on needs. Therefore, students may be without SNA support for some of the day. SNAs should be involved in training and attend meetings relevant to their role. They will also carry out duties as assigned by the Principal/Deputy Principal in accordance with the school's SNA Policy which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

8. Outside Agencies

St. Fergus' NS has fostered and maintained positive links with a significant number of outside agencies that support our students.

These include:

- National Council for Special Education (NCSE).
- Special Education Support Services (SESS).
- National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB).
- HSE Social Work Department.
- NEPS-National Educational Support Service.
- Outside Agencies – both public and private services to include:

- Psychologists.
- Clinical psychologists.
- Psychiatrists.
- Occupational therapists.
- Speech and language therapists.
- Medical practitioners.

This list is not exhaustive and the School will develop further links with outside agencies as the needs of the students dictate. It may be necessary to hold case conferences with relevant professional experts with the permission and knowledge of the student's parents (and often their attendance) in order to determine the best approach and provision for that student. It may be necessary to complete questionnaires/forms from these agencies regarding our students. These forms are filled with the permission of the relevant parents and always returned directly to the supporting agent.

Identifying Students with Individual Needs and Learning Differences.

Access to Support

As of March 2017, there is a new model of allocating teaching resources to students. Individual students are no longer granted specific hours from the NCSE based on their diagnosis. From September 2017 schools will have the autonomy to allocate teaching resources based on the level of a student's need, rather than on the basis of diagnosis. Decisions on the support offered to students will be made based on a number of criteria.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Information gathered from a psychological assessment (where the student has presented with same).
- Information gathered from parents.
- Information gathered from Pre School/Previous School - student's learning, emotional, behavioural and social needs are evaluated.
- Communication with outside agencies.

A Class/School Support Plan is then developed to support the student. This plan will be made available to all staff, monitored and reviewed and student progress will be recorded.

Methods of Identifying Students with Individual Needs and Learning Differences:

- (i) Pre-enrolment: On acceptance of their child's place in the school, parents will forward relevant documentation, as requested in and in keeping with the Admissions Policy of St. Fergus NS.

<https://www.stfergusns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Admissions-Policy-St.-Fergus-NS.pdf>

- (ii) The Principal will meet with parents. in order to ensure that adequate resources can be accessed for that student. It is to be understood that the ability of the school to respond to the educational needs of any student applying for admission is dependent on the Department of Education and Skills supplying the appropriate facilities and resources to allow the School to answer that need. It may therefore be necessary for the Board of Management to defer enrolment of a student.
- (iii) Teacher Observation of pupil. Teachers will open a Classroom Support Plan as per guidelines on same. This plan will allow for differentiation and adaption within the mainstream classroom for the pupil. It will also rule out possible reasons for pupils not meeting expected success e.g. vision problems.
- (iv) Following discussion with parents and the differentiation of class work, without success, pupils are then referred to SETs, where, using diagnostic and screening tests, the SET will draw up an SSP/SSP+ (see link above), with input from parents, classroom teachers, Principal, SNAs and outside agencies if appropriate, to best meet the needs of the child.
- (v) If expected achievement is not reached after a decided length of time or if targets in plans are continuously not met, referral to outside agencies, such as West Limerick Children's Service, NEPS etc, may be needed at this stage. Parental input and permission is always needed for this.

****For further detail on this process, please refer to our Additional Support Policy.**

<https://www.stfergusns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Additional-Support-Policy-Jan2020.pdf>

In its operation for establishing a continuum of assessment and support , the School shall be guided by;

- The New Model of Allocation (DES)

https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/ActiveCirculars/cl0014_2017

- The DES Guidelines

<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/SpecialEducation/Guidelines-for-Post-Primary-Schools-Supporting-Students-with-Special-Educational-Needs-in-Mainstream-Schools>.

- The National Education Psychological Services (NEPS)

<https://assets.gov.ie/41219/9407bf80d6f54e4c85732884fb535490.pdf>

https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/neps_special_needs_resource_pack.pdf

<https://assets.gov.ie/40642/674c98d5e72d48b7975f60895b4e8c9a.pdf>

<https://assets.gov.ie/40645/20f442fa414940f894506ed717d7f635.pdf>

<https://assets.gov.ie/40684/97bbea80d96b4057bf3f1f01107c7db4.pdf>

<https://assets.gov.ie/41224/26118f958c944cacada52381fb6f25e7.docx>

<https://assets.gov.ie/41225/dbb957b3172c41efab580705bfaf2d90.pdf>

Allocation of NCSE Resources and Teaching of Students with SEN.

NCSE resources in our School will be directed towards the student with the greatest need and in accordance with the model of allocation for additional support hours. The SET team will interpret the outcome of assessments and consider the most appropriate form of intervention for the student, in consultation with parents, class teachers, SNAs and relevant outside agencies. The School aspires to educate students with SEN in an inclusive setting within the class group, supported by an SNA, where allocated. This may take the form of team teaching. It may also take the form of small group withdrawal. One-to-one teaching may occur if other students of similar needs are not available at that time in the day. If withdrawal of students with SEN from mainstream classes for supplementary or support teaching is deemed necessary, parents' permission will be sought via a letter of consent.

Models of Provision of Support

We aim to provide a model of responsible inclusion that best meets the needs of the individual student, in line with the New Model of Allocation and Guidelines (DES).

- As an inclusive school, support for achieving learning outcomes or intentions in the mainstream class group is the preferred method of provision.

Co-Teaching – where students with educational needs and all students are supported in the mainstream class room when a Special Education Teacher teaches in cooperation with the subject teacher supports this.

- Small group classes are arranged on the basis of similar need profiles and the capacity to withdraw students at the same time. The organisation of these groupings is the responsibility of the individual special education teachers and overseen by the Principal. Withdrawal for small groups usually occurs at times when the students have official exemptions from Gaeilge.
- Individual support classes are used only where a student requires specialised individual support.
- Literacy and numeracy, curricular and organisational, emotional and social skills, and technology support is given during individual and small groups where appropriate.
- In exceptional circumstances, an alternative timetable may also be arranged for a small number of students for whom it is deemed necessary, after consultation with the psychologist, parents and teachers. These students may have their timetable reduced because they cannot sustain a full day or full curriculum. If such an occasion happens, the reduced day must be recorded appropriately with NCSE, SENO and TUSLA returns.

Approaches to Learning in the SET Team

The SET team will provide a variety of experiences/activities to meet specific targets in a child's SSP/SSP+ and during a lesson. Teachers will identify the learning style of the individual and use suitable methodologies to appeal to the kinaesthetic, auditory, sensory, linguistic, visual and interpersonal intelligences. Lessons are conducted in a secure, supportive, play led and disciplined manner. The students and the staff interact in a manner that demonstrates mutual respect. Our school believes that learning takes place most effectively in the context of a caring relationship and that a good teacher/student rapport fosters trust and promotes self-reliance and initiative in the student.

Some of the programmes offered include:

- Literacy and Numeracy Programmes
- Social Skills
- Independence Programmes
- Behaviour Support
- Restorative Time
- Technology

Code of Behaviour

All students in St. Fergus' NS are expected to adhere to the School's Code of Behaviour. However, it is accepted that for some students, extra layers of support/interventions will be needed before implementing sanctions according to the Code of Behaviour. This does not remove sanctions but adjusts the sanctions to meet the individual situation. It is accepted that if a ladder of structured and persistent supports does not change the student's behaviour the Code of Behaviour will be acted upon.

Relationship with other School Policies.

The Inclusion Policy adheres to the terms of all other policies in St Fergus' National School and must be reading in conjunction with them. Please see;

<https://www.stfergusns.ie/>

This Policy was drawn up by Staff and Board of Management of St. Fergus National School in June 2023.

It will be ratified at a Board of Management Meeting on 2nd October 2023.

It will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if deemed necessary.

Signed: *Thomas Barrett*

Chairperson of Board of Management
Management

Date: 2nd October 2023

Signed: *Deirdre Kennelly*

Principal/Secretary to the Board of

Date: 2nd October 2023

Relevant Laws, DES Circulars and Guidelines and Support Agencies.

- Education Act 1998:

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/51/enacted/en/>

- The Education (Welfare) Act 2000:

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/22/enacted/en/>

- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004:

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/act/30/enacted/en/>

- The Equal Status Acts 2000

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/>

- The Equality Act 2004:

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/act/24/enacted/en/>

- Circular 14/2017 (New Model of Allocation):

https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0014_2017

- The Guidelines for Post Primary Schools: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (2017):

<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/Guidelines-for-Post>

Primary-Schools-Supporting-Students-with-Special-Educational-Needs-in-Mainstream-Schools.pdf

- The NEPS Continuum of Support:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational>

Psychological-Service-

NEPS/neps_post_primary_continuum_resource_pack.pdf

- National Council for Special Education
www.ncse.ie
- Department of Education and Skills
www.education.ie
- St. Fergus' National School
<https://www.stfergusns.ie/>