



St. Mary's Diocesan School

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Additional Educational Needs (AEN) Policy

Mission Statement

St. Mary's Diocesan School is a Catholic Secondary School under the trusteeship of the Diocese of Meath and patronage of the Bishop of Meath. The school is committed to the development of the whole person offering equal opportunities to all to achieve their full potential in a familial Christian environment. The school aspires to an education based on high ideals and a broad curriculum, which will allow our students to confidently play their role in society.

School Aims

We aim to develop a community of learning in which each pupil's talents, physical, intellectual, and spiritual, may unfold as fully as possible in an atmosphere of openness, confidence and generosity. We seek to promote in all our students' qualities of honesty and integrity and the capacity for authentic, courageous self-expression. Our motto "In Christo Confido", inspires us to promote the emergence of reflective, articulate and committed Christians with a deep sense of their vocation to shape their world according to the values of the gospel.

Our school

School Type: All-boys Catholic post-primary school

Enrolment: Approximately 900 students

Programmes: Junior Cycle, Level Two Learning Programmes (L2LP) Junior Cycle, Transition Year, Senior Cycle (Leaving Certificate Established and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.)

Rationale and Legislative Context

This policy provides practical guidance for staff, parents/guardians, and students on AEN practices and procedures. It aligns with relevant Irish education legislation, Department of Education circulars and guidance, and the NEPS Continuum of Support

framework. It should be read in conjunction with St. Mary's policies on Admissions, Child Protection and Safeguarding, Behaviour, Anti-Bullying, Assessment, and Data Protection (GDPR).

Aims of the Policy

This policy aims to:

Identify additional educational needs at the earliest possible stage and provide appropriate supports.

Allocate resources effectively and equitably, prioritising those with greatest levels of need.

Clarify roles and responsibilities across the school community.

Track, monitor, and review student progress to inform ongoing provision.

Ensure clear communication among staff, parents/guardians, students, and external agencies.

Definition of Additional Educational Needs

Students with AEN are those whose needs are not met by standard classroom provision and who require additional support. Needs may be short-term or long-term and can include (but are not limited to):

Specific learning difficulties (e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia).

General learning difficulty.

Sensory or physical disability.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Speech and language disorder.

Emotional, behavioural, social, and/or well-being needs.

Temporary difficulties due to illness, trauma, or transition.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) needs.

Exceptionally able/gifted students requiring enrichment.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Board of Management

Oversees the development, implementation, and periodic review of AEN policy and provision.

Ensures appropriate accommodation, secure storage, and deployment of human and physical resources.

2. Principal

Leads a whole-school approach to identification, support, and review.

Oversees assessment and screening procedures.

Coordinates transition from feeder schools.

Facilitates CPD for staff and clarifies roles.

Establishes effective procedures for engagement with parents/guardians and external agencies.

Maintains and updates School Provision Plan.

3. Deputy Principal and Assistant Principals

Support implementation and operational oversight of AEN provision, data tracking, timetabling, and referral pathways.

Liaise with Year Heads, AEN Coordinator, and Guidance.

4. AEN Team

Coordinates the AEN team work and caseloads.

Liaises with NEPS, NCSE, HSE, and other external agencies.

Prioritises assessments; schedules planning meetings.

Oversees applications for Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations (RACE).

Supports transfer and transition programmes.

Updates the Register of AEN

Feeds into School Provision plan.

5. Care Team

Comprised of Principal, Deputy Principals, AEN Team member(s), and Guidance Counsellors.

Agrees interventions for referrals (Referral system through Year Heads etc), monitors implementation, and reviews outcomes.

Organisation of House exams/Mock/State exams to accommodate additional needs.

Assessment to identify needs for early intervention. Gather data across the school to triangulate response.

6. Class Teachers

Hold primary responsibility for the teaching and learning of all students in their classes, including those receiving additional support.

Differentiate teaching and assessment, engage with and inform support plans.

Oversee reasonable accommodations for CBAs/Assessment Tasks.

Liaise with SNAs where applicable and collaborate with the AEN team.

Co-teaching for inclusion.

7. AEN Teachers

Use a range of methodologies to address identified needs.

Deliver in-class, small-group, and individual supports.

Develop Student Support Files (SSFs) collaboratively with subject teachers etc.

Administer/interpret assessments where appropriate; review targets and communicate progress.

8. Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

Meet the care needs of assigned students in line with Departmental guidance.

Promote independence, access, and safety in collaboration with teachers and AEN staff.

Support during examinations.

Technical assistance with devices.

9. Guidance

Provide pastoral care and guidance counselling.

Contribute to care-team meetings; support well-being, transitions, and resilience.

Career pathways: DARE/Access routes – advise/guide through the application process.

10. Parents/Guardians

Share relevant reports and information.

Support school interventions by attending meetings and maintain communication.

Assist in creation and review of SSPs.

11. Students

Engage with mutually agreed targets and strategies.

Participate in self-assessment. Take increasing ownership of learning.

Offered opportunity to contribute to their SSPs.

Identification and Assessment

Students may be identified for supplementary support through:

Standardised assessments/screening on entry and at key points.

Information from parents/guardians and feeder schools (Primary school passports).

Reports from external professionals (e.g., NEPS, clinicians).

Teacher observation and class-based assessments.

Ongoing monitoring of progress and engagement.

The school maintains a Register of Students with AEN (securely held) to inform provision. A Provision plan is also maintained, using the students place on the continuum of support to advise.

Continuum of Support

St. Mary's implements the Continuum of Support (which is all subject to review):

Support for All: Whole-school and classroom strategies including differentiation, universal supports, and targeted pastoral care.

Support for Some: Short-term/small-group interventions addressing specific barriers (e.g., literacy, numeracy, social skills).

Support for a Few: More intensive, individualised supports with tailored targets and frequent review.

Provision is flexible and responsive, increasing or decreasing according to demonstrated need and progress.

Meeting Needs and Allocating Resources

AEN teachers are deployed to address identified needs through a balanced mix of in-class support, small-group teaching, and individual interventions.

Differentiation, team-teaching, and heterogeneous grouping are prioritised to promote inclusion.

Co-teaching to meet the needs in the class for all.

Students with the highest level of need access the greatest level of support.

Resource allocation decisions are data-informed and reviewed regularly.

Student Support Files (SSFs)

SSFs document:

Student details and context.

Holistic and strengths based.

Timeline of actions and supports received.

Assessment data (standardised/diagnostic where applicable).

SMART targets, methodologies and strategies.

Review notes and next steps.

SSFs are developed collaboratively (teachers, parents/guardians, students, relevant professionals) and stored securely in line with Data Protection.

Tracking, Recording and Reviewing Progress

Progress is formally reviewed at least three times per year for all students (Support for All), with more frequent review for Support for Some/Few.

Reviews consider assessment data, classroom performance, attendance, well-being indicators, and stakeholder feedback.

Outcomes inform adjustments to targets, strategies, and resource allocation.

Health and Safety and Child Protection

All provision operates within the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding policies and statutory guidance.

Individual risk assessments and care plans are developed and implemented as required to ensure safety and access.

Garda vetting applies to all personnel providing services.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Exceptionally Able Students

EAL students receive targeted language supports focusing on literacy, oral language, and curricular access, with appropriate scaffolding and assessment accommodations where applicable, subject to review.

Exceptionally able students access enrichment and extension through differentiated tasks, projects, competitions, mentoring, and leadership opportunities.

Integration and Curriculum

Where appropriate, students may access specialised settings/resource rooms for focused interventions.

Check and Connect may be provided for a short time period (6 weeks) as an intervention.

Integration into mainstream classes is promoted via pre-/post-teaching, social and life-skills programmes, sensory regulation strategies, and reasonable accommodations for learning and assessment.

Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) – Where Applicable

For students requiring Level 2 Learning Programmes, planning and assessment are collaborative and aligned with Junior Cycle principles and statements of learning. This aligns with our Assessment policy. Subject teachers differentiate objectives and assessments accordingly. We promote excellence through teaching to challenge the students engaging in our programmes. All efforts are made to enable/facilitate students to take some subjects at Junior Cycle level.

Transitions

St. Mary's works with parents/guardians, primary schools, and external agencies to support smooth transitions (e.g., Open Night, induction days, tailored visits, orientation materials, student passports, student files to record data on each student).

Transition planning also supports movement into Senior Cycle and post-school pathways (further/higher education, training, employment).

Special Class

NCSE Eligibility letter 2026 required. Admission deadline was October 1st, 2025 for September 2026 enrolment.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

All records are maintained and accessed in accordance with Data Protection legislation and school policy.

Information sharing is limited to personnel with a legitimate educational interest and is conducted professionally and confidentially.

Implementation and Review

This policy takes effect on the date of Board approval, April 27th, 2026.

It will be reviewed as needed with consultation across staff, parents/guardians, and students.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Referral Pathway

Referral is to be done through Schoolwise, or through speaking to the Year Head who will pass it to the Deputy Principal.

Appendix B: SSF Template

[NEPS 20250306 Guidance-in-Developing-a-Support-Plan.pdf](#)

[SET Guidelines and supporting documentation to aid schools in supporting Children/Young people with Special Education Needs](#)

Appendix C: Glossary of Terms:

NEPS: National Educational Psychological Service

NCSE: National Council for Special Education

HSE: Health Service Executive

SNA: Special Needs Assistant

RACE: Reasonable Accommodations at Certificate Examinations

CBA: Classroom based assessments

AT: Assistive Technology

L2LP: Junior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programme