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Colaiste Abbain

[LEARNING SUPPORT/SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY]

The following document contains Coláiste Abbáin' Learning Support/Special Educational Needs Policy.



Coláiste Abbain

Adamstown

Co. Wexford

Learning Support/Special Educational Needs Policy

INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Abbain, Adamstown endeavours to respond to the educational needs of the community. It aims to create and sustain a caring, flexible, supportive and safe environment in which staff and students feel valued, motivated and stimulated in their efforts to grow as human beings and to realise their full potential. Coláiste Abbain believes that its objectives are best achieved in a safe and secure environment, which, while recognising individual rights and responsibilities, encourages commitment, and shared responsibility for the achievement of excellence and for the common good.

Coláiste Abbain believes that all children and young adults should be valued equally, irrespective of any individual needs or differences and is committed to making effective provision, through the Department of education and Science and other agencies, for those students in schools who have learning support/special educational needs. Coláiste Abbain is committed to raising standards and ensuring that all students achieve to their true abilities. All staff must commit to supporting and nurturing students, and to supporting their families and those who work with them, where appropriate. The best possible working practices must be based on respect, trust, honesty and integrity.

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

1. To ensure that students with learning support/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.
2. To ensure that all members of staff are aware of the learning support/special educational needs of students and of the contribution they, the staff members, can make in this area.
3. To ensure that literacy/numeracy is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.
4. To ensure that learning support/special educational needs is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.
5. To ensure that students with learning support/special educational needs are offered a broad, balanced, relevant, progressive continuous and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in a inclusive way.

6. To encourage the creation of a caring, welcoming, stable and stimulating environment in Coláiste Abbain by encouraging each child to develop intellectually, socially, morally, and physically according to their abilities.
7. To set high standards for students with learning support/special educational needs and to provide them with appropriate guidance, in order to encourage them to achieve to their full potential and to prepare them for their roles as adult members of society.
8. To ensure that the achievement of students with learning support/special educational needs is recognised, celebrated and encouraged.
9. To develop staff expertise in supporting students with learning support/special educational needs.
10. To encourage and foster positive partnership with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at school and at home.
11. To ensure a commitment to informed decision-making based on secure evidence.
12. To co-ordinate the advice, guidance and support of other agencies in supporting students with learning support/special educational needs.
13. To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources.
14. To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of practice in support of students with learning support/special educational needs.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to all student attending Coláiste Abbain, Adamstown and who have learning support/special educational needs, either short or long term.



THE LEGAL CONTEXT

This policy is drafted in the context of the specific provisions and definitions with regard to children with disabilities and special educational needs, and the statutory requirements placed on schools, Boards of Management and Vocational Education Committee by

- (i) The Education Act 1998
- (ii) The Education (Welfare) Act 2000

This policy is drafted in consideration of the Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill 2002.

DEFINITIONS

Students with learning support/special educational needs should be recognised as individuals who have strengths that can be nurtured and weaknesses that can be supported.

The statutory definition of 'disability' in Section 2(1) of the Education Act 1998 is as follows:

- 1) The total or partial loss of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the loss of a part of the person's body, or
- 2) The presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness, or
- 3) The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body, or

- 4) A condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or
- 5) A condition, illness or disease which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour.

The statutory definition of a child with specific educational needs in Section 1 of the Disabilities Bill 2004 is as follows:

.....a child who has an educational disability. This latter term is defined as a restriction in the capacity of the child to participate in, and benefit from, education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.

In consideration of the statutory definition above, Coláiste Abbain considers a student as being in need of learning support if he/she:

- 1) Is recognised as being the 10th percentile or below on a standardized test and following a personal profile investigation by the relevant professional personnel, is identified as being in need of support.
- 2) Is failing to achieve in school due to specific personal circumstances.

In consideration of the standard definition, Coláiste Abbain considers a student as having special educational needs as one who has a learning/physical difficulty, which calls for support provision to be made for him/her. This in particular refers to:

- 1) Students with a disability that prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind provided for children of the same age in Coláiste Abbain.
- 2) Students, who following the correct identification procedures, have been assessed as special needs by an educational psychologist and are deemed to be entitled to resource support. At present the Department of Education and Science defines this as the 2nd percentile or below.

Coláiste Abbain defines special educational provision as educational provision, which is additional to or otherwise different from the educational provision made generally for students of the same age in Coláiste Abbain.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Coláiste Abbain

1. To promote educational inclusion in the school.
2. To adequately resource the learning support/special educational needs of students in the school, subject to those resources being made available by the Department of Education and Science.
3. To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources through monitoring and evaluation.
4. To support the development of best practice.
5. To support teachers and other staff in their work by way of targeted professional development and training, member if is ILSA, IATSE and other relevant organisations, and attendance at courses, seminars and conferences.



B. Boards of Management

1. To ensure that all students with learning support/special educational needs are identified and assessed.
2. To ensure that the school has a comprehensive learning support/special educational needs policy in place, which has been developed collaboratively with all the relevant partners, to monitor the implementation of that policy and to ensure its evaluation.
3. To ensure that a broad, balanced, relevant, progressive, continuous and differentiated curriculum is provided in the school.
4. To ensure that necessary resources are sought on behalf of students with learning support/special educational needs.
5. To ensure that a learning support/special educational needs co-ordinator is appointed from among the teaching staff.
6. To promote the development of positive partnership with partners and other relevant agencies/personnel.
7. To ensure that the Learning Support/Special Educational Needs Policy forms part of the School Plan.
8. To develop a whole school approach to literacy and numeracy.

C. Principal

1. On behalf of the Board of Management the Principal has responsibility for all aspects of the day-to-day management of policy and provision for students with learning support/special educational needs.
2. To appoint a Learning Support/Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator from among the teaching staff and to work closely with the co-ordinator.
3. To keep the Board of Management informed regarding issues of relevance to learning support/special educational needs.
4. In consultation with the Learning Support/special educational needs co-ordinator and other relevant personnel to liaise with the Committee and/or the Department of Education and Science regarding needs and provision. This also includes applications for reasonable accommodation and exemptions in relation to state examinations, as well as assessments.
5. To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources, including the allocation of hours and funds. This should include equality of access and opportunity for students with special educational needs in terms of a well-equipped room and other resources.
6. To establish a care team within the school with a specific remit to ensure identification of and support for students with learning support-special educational needs.

D. Learning Support/Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

1. To oversee the day-to-day operation of the school's learning support/special educational needs policy, and to work closely with and under the overall direction of the school principal.
2. To engage in personal professional development.
3. To liaise with and advise other teachers.
4. To meet regularly with the learning support/special educational needs team, home school community liaison officer, the guidance counsellor and other relevant personnel, as appropriate.
5. To manage special needs assistants.
6. To oversee the records of all students with learning support/special educational needs.

7. To liaise with parents of students with learning support/special educational needs.
8. To contribute to the in-service needs and training of staff.
9. To ensure the distribution of suitable learning resources and teacher aids, subject to those resources and teaching aids being made available by the Department of Education and Science or other agencies.
10. To liaise with external agencies including primary schools, National Educational Psychological Service, Health Boards and Voluntary bodies.
11. To ensure that individual Learning Plans are in place, as required, and to develop other practices to aid the identification of students with learning support/special educational needs.
12. To co-ordinate the provision for students with learning support/special educational needs, and keep a register of needs and provision.

E. General Teaching Staff

1. To make provision for students with learning support/special educational needs in their classes and subject areas.
2. To develop, within their subject areas, systems for the identification of students with learning support/special educational needs.
3. To use resources effectively and efficiently and to be accountable for the use of resources.
4. To be part of a whole school approach in relation to literacy and numeracy.
5. To develop policy and practice and to work towards the achievement of excellence in all aspects of his/her work.
6. To develop a positive ethos in the classroom for fostering an inclusive approach to meeting social and educational needs.
7. To identify personal training needs and to secure training where needed.

F. Parents

1. To work in positive partnership with the school and other agencies.
2. To support and encourage their child in his/her education.



G. Special Needs Assistants

1. Special Needs Assistants (SNAø) work closely with and under the direction of the learning support/special educational needs co-ordinator and the individual subject teachers in the implementation of the schoolø policy as it relates to individual students or groups of students. In particular, SNAø play a very important role in the health and safety of the student/s and in his/her/their social and emotional development.

H. Learning Support and Resource Teachers

1. Learning support teachers provide diagnostic assessment, monitoring, and advice to teachers, students and parents as well as direct teaching for students who have learning support needs.
2. Resource teachers provide diagnostic assessments, monitoring advice as well as direct teaching to students with special educational needs either on an individual or small group basis of not more than 6 students.

3. Resource and learning support teachers should be involved in the development and delivery, or the organisation of delivery, of Individual Education Plans, and in the context of a whole school approach to the issue.
4. Individual Education Plans delivered within the context of TUI directives.

IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING SUPPORT

Each school's learning support/special educational needs policy will describe its arrangements for identifying students with learning support/special educational needs. Schools are expected to identify as soon as possible difficulties that can be supported, or special needs that require adapted intervention.

The identification process will usually involve the following:

1. Liaison with Primary Schools
2. Liaison with Parents
3. Observations by the subject, pastoral care teachers and guidance counsellors, as appropriate.
4. Formal assessments/testing

ASSESSMENTS

Coláiste Abbain expects that students will be assessed as follows:

1. Standardised diagnostic testing on entry to the school.
2. Referral to the National Educational Psychological Service as appropriate.
3. Parental consent must be sought for psychological assessments.
4. Assessment through teaching in general subject areas.
5. Follow up assessment and testing relevant to 1 above.
6. Original records of such assessments shall be maintained in the school as the property of Co. Wexford Vocational Education Committee and shall not be removed from the school under any circumstances.

RESOURCES

Application of Additional Resources:

1. Coláiste Abbain is committed to the provision of human, physical and practical resources in all its schools in a fair, equitable, open and transparent manner.
2. Coláiste Abbain will make application to the Department of Education and Science for additional resources on behalf of schools and/or individual students on receipt of the following:
 - a) Duly completed forms as specified by the Department of Education and Science
 - b) Current psychological reports, as appropriate
 - c) Other relevant support documentation, as appropriate.
 - d) Cover letter signed by the School Principal
3. Once the Department of Education and Science hands down its decision to Co. Wexford VEC, this will be communicated immediately to Coláiste Abbain. The school will notify the student and parents.



4. Schools are entitled to appeal Department of Education and Science decisions. Any such appeals should be made through the Committee's office and should be supported by relevant documentation.
5. All communication with Department of Education and Science on matters of resource provision should be made through the Committee's office.

Deployment of Resources

Coláiste Abbain, through allocation of resources, seeks to meet the needs of students. Coláiste Abbain will deploy resources in a way that best promotes the students' learning and development, with full accountability for all resources allocated. This includes the deployment of resources for the specific purpose for which they are intended.

PROVISION

In addition, Coláiste Abbain will meet the needs of students with learning support/special educational needs through the totality of learning opportunities that they provide. Coláiste Abbain keeps under review the suitability of its learning environment and to identify deficiencies that impede the learning and development of its students and to remedy these deficiencies in as far as is practicable.



Coláiste Abbain will have in place:

1. Policies for learning support/special needs, including curriculum delivery, behaviour management, the assessment and monitoring of students' progress and attendance, as well as systems for monitoring and evaluating provision for learning support/special educational needs.
2. Systems for detecting learning support/special educational needs and for communicating them to all staff who will be in contact with the student.
3. Appropriate time allocations in respect of meetings, assessments and coordination.
4. A Pastoral Care system that offers support to students.
5. Access for students with learning support/special educational needs to appropriate facilities.
6. A counselling service for students.
7. Access to appropriate information technology and other appropriate equipment and aids.

ACCESS FOR PERSONS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

1. Coláiste Abbain wishes to promote understanding of the needs of people with physical disabilities
2. Coláiste Abbain wishes to offer equality of opportunity to students with physical disability and to ensure this by constantly reviewing and revising procedures, which may have the effect of being discriminatory
3. Coláiste Abbain is committed to educating all students in such a way that discriminatory behaviour of any kind is addressed.
4. Coláiste Abbain seeks, through the Department of Education and Science, to have the school adapted to ensure total accessibility for the physically disabled.
5. Coláiste Abbain requires that school management recognises the needs of the physically disabled, when designing curricula and drafting timetables.

Colaiste Abbain will support teachers who engage in professional development courses specifically aimed at improving the service they can offer to the physically disabled e.g. Braille, etc.

REVIEW AND EVALUATION

1. The Learning Support/Resource Network shall review this policy annually.
2. The following criteria shall be considered essential for the successful implementation of the policy:
 - a) The acceptance by schools of the aim, objectives and principles as outlined in the policy
 - b) The fulfilment of roles and responsibilities, as outlined in the policy
 - c) Compliance with identification, inclusion and provision measures as set out in the policy

SUMMARY

This policy is based on the following key principles:

- a) All students with learning support/special educational needs will be identified as early as possible
- b) There will be positive partnership with parents with regard to identification of and provision for students with learning support/special educational needs
- c) There will be a whole school approach to issues of identification and provision in all of the Committees schools
- d) The Committee will encourage inclusive education for students with learning support/special educational needs
- e) There will be close co-operation with all agencies to ensure a multi-agency approach to support
- f) There will be targeted programmes of professional training and development
- g) There will be a support network for teachers working in this area
- h) There will be systems in place for the resourcing of Colaiste Abbain in relation to students with learning support/special educational needs within a realistic understanding of resource availability from the Department of Education & Science.
- i) There will be regular review of policy and practice in relation to all issues pertaining to learning support/special educational needs.

