

GAELSCOIL PHORT LÁIRGE

Bunscoil Lán-Ghaeilge

Uimhir Rolla: 19853L

SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY

Date of Ratification: ___23/03/26___

Next Review Due: _____2031_____

Ratified by the Board of Management, Gaelscoil Phort Láirge

Príomhoide / Principal: Fionnuala de Chnoic

Cathaoirleach an Bhoird / Chairperson of the Board: Rónán Ó hÓgartaigh

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1. Introductory Statement

This policy was developed by the staff of Gaelscoil Phort Láirge in consultation with the Board of Management, teaching staff and support staff. It sets out the comprehensive, staged and coordinated approach through which Special Education is provided in the school.

This document serves as the official guide for all staff and members of the school community in relation to the identification, planning, provision and review of support for pupils with Additional Educational Needs.

The school recognises that supporting pupils with additional needs is a whole-school responsibility and that every teacher plays a central role in this process.

2. Legislative Framework

This policy aligns with the following legislation and Department of Education guidance:

- Education Act (1998)
- Education (Welfare) Act (2000)
- EPSEN Act (2004)
- Equal Status Acts
- Circular 0013/2017 – Special Education Teaching Allocation Model
- Circular 0004/2025 – SET Allocation 2025/26
- Circular 0025/2022 and 0032/2025 – Special Needs Assistant Scheme
- Circular 0064/2024 – SET Provision Guidelines
- Circular 0069/2025 – Assessment of Need
- Circular 0072/2025 – Irish Sign Language Scheme
- NEPS Continuum of Support Guidelines

Support is provided on the basis of identified need and assessment evidence. A diagnosis alone does not determine allocation.

3. Philosophy and Principles

Gaelscoil Phort Láirge is committed to an inclusive education system in which every pupil is enabled to reach their full potential.

This policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- Inclusion as standard practice
- Respect for diversity
- High expectations for all pupils
- Graduated and proportionate response
- Professional collaboration

- Partnership with parents
- Evidence-informed practice

4. School Context

The school has 207 pupils enrolled and 8 mainstream class teachers. There are 2 full-time Special Education Teachers and 1 part-time Special Education Teacher (2 days per week). The school employs 3 full-time Special Needs Assistants.

Special Education provision is organised in accordance with Department allocation and identified pupil needs.

5. Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- Ensure equitable access to a broad and balanced curriculum
- Provide timely and targeted support
- Allocate resources fairly and proportionately
- Promote academic, social and emotional progress
- Develop pupil independence and confidence

6. Continuum of Support

The school follows the NEPS Continuum of Support model. This is a three-stage framework enabling a graduated and proportionate response to pupil need.

A central principle of this framework is that support is provided at the most inclusive level initially, with escalation only where necessary.

6.1 Step 1 – Classroom Support

The class teacher is responsible for Stage 1. Emphasis is placed on effective differentiation, varied teaching strategies and ongoing monitoring. A Classroom Support Plan is developed where persistent difficulties are identified.

6.2 Step 2 – School Support

Where a pupil continues to experience difficulties despite classroom differentiation, they progress to Stage 2 of the Continuum.

At this stage:

- The class teacher consults with the Special Education Teacher
- Assessment data is reviewed
- Targeted interventions are implemented
- Clear short-term targets are established

A School Support Plan is developed outlining SMART targets, strategies and review dates. The plan is reviewed at least once per term.

The class teacher retains primary responsibility for the pupil's learning, even where additional support is provided.

6.3 Step 3 – *School Support Plus*

For more complex, long-term or multi-faceted needs, a School Support Plus Plan is implemented.

At this stage:

- A detailed analysis of needs is undertaken
- Professional reports are considered where available
- NEPS or NCSE may be consulted
- More intensive individualised interventions may be implemented

This plan is developed in collaboration with parents and reviewed more frequently where necessary.

7. *Special Education Provision*

Special Education provision is organised in accordance with Department SET allocation and identified pupil needs.

Time is allocated based on:

- Level and complexity of need
- Assessment evidence
- Current progress
- Whole-school priorities
- The principle of proportionality

The highest level of support is provided to pupils with the most significant needs.

8. *Roles and Responsibilities*

8.1 *Board of Management*

The Board of Management is responsible for ratifying this policy and overseeing its effective implementation.

8.2 *Principal*

The Principal holds overall responsibility for Special Education provision.

This includes:

- Strategic leadership
- Oversight of resource allocation
- Oversight of quality of provision
- Ensuring legislative compliance

Day-to-day coordination may be delegated to the SENCO; overall responsibility remains with the Principal at all times.

8.3 *Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO)*

Under the direction of the Principal, the SENCO coordinates:

- SET timetabling
- Planning meetings
- Development and review of Support Plans
- Communication with external agencies
- Collection and analysis of assessment data

8.4 *Class Teacher*

The class teacher has primary responsibility for:

- Teaching and assessing all pupils
- Effective differentiation
- Planning and monitoring progress
- Communication with parents

Teaching responsibility does not transfer to the Special Education Teacher when additional support is provided.

8.5 *Special Education Teacher*

The Special Education Teacher provides additional targeted support in collaboration with the class teacher.

This includes:

- Diagnostic assessment
- Targeted intervention
- Recording of progress
- Professional advice to staff

8.6 Special Needs Assistant

The Special Needs Assistant supports the care and safety needs of pupils as outlined in relevant circulars.

The SNA does not have a teaching role and works under the direction of the class teacher and Principal.

9. Assessment and Identification

A combination of the following tools is used:

- Standardised tests in literacy and numeracy
- Early intervention screening tools
- Diagnostic assessments
- Structured observation
- Parental input

No single score is used as the sole criterion for support.

10. Selection and Allocation

Allocation decisions are based on a holistic assessment of need and the principle of proportionality.

Time allocation is reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with current pupil needs.

11. Support Plans

A Support Plan includes:

- Strengths
- Identified needs
- SMART targets
- Strategies and interventions
- Staff responsibilities
- Review dates

Records are stored securely in accordance with GDPR.

12. Timetabling and Organisation

SET timetabling is coordinated collaboratively and prioritises pupils with the most significant needs.

Every effort is made to minimise disruption to curriculum access when withdrawal occurs.

13. Collaboration with Parents

Gaelscoil Phort Láirge recognises the central role of parents in the development and support of their children. Parents are informed at an early stage of any concerns regarding their child's progress and are invited to participate in the planning process.

This includes:

- Formal and informal meetings
- Sharing information about targets and interventions
- Termly review of progress
- Advice regarding home support

Communication is conducted in a clear, respectful and transparent manner.

14. Collaboration with External Agencies

In certain cases, the school may consult external agencies to support a pupil's needs.

This may include:

- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- Therapeutic services (speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, etc.)

Collaboration occurs with parental consent and in accordance with data protection legislation.

15. Monitoring, Evaluation and Record-Keeping

The effectiveness of support is monitored through:

- Regular review of targets
- Analysis of assessment data
- Professional discussion among staff
- Parental input

Time allocation and interventions are reviewed based on evidence of progress.

All records are stored securely, confidentially and in accordance with GDPR.

16. *Child Protection*

Gaelscoil Phort Láirge fully adheres to Department of Education Child Protection Procedures.

In one-to-one support situations:

- Doors remain open or visible spaces are used
- Supervision guidelines are followed
- Any concerns are reported in accordance with official procedures

17. *Complaints Procedure*

Complaints relating to Special Education provision are addressed through the school's staged complaints procedure:

1. Discussion with the class teacher
2. If unresolved, discussion with the Principal
3. If concerns persist, referral to the Board of Management

All complaints are handled fairly, promptly and confidentially.

18. *Glossary of Terms*

Special Education Teacher (SET) – Teacher providing additional targeted support to pupils with additional needs.

SENCO – Staff member coordinating daily provision under the direction of the Principal.

Special Needs Assistant (SNA) – Staff member supporting care needs; does not have a teaching role.

Continuum of Support – Three-stage framework for responding to pupil needs.

19. *Official References*

This policy references the following:

- Education Act (1998)

- EPSEN (2004)
- Circular 0013/2017
- Circular 0004/2025
- Circular 0025/2022
- Circular 0032/2025
- Circular 0064/2024
- Circular 0069/2025
- Circular 0072/2025
- NEPS Guidelines

20. Appendices

20.1 Appendix 1: *Staff Details*

Special Education Staffing Structure

Special Education provision in Gaelscoil Phort Láirge is organised in accordance with the Department of Education allocation and identified pupil needs.

The current staffing structure includes:

- 8 mainstream class teachers
- 2 full-time Special Education Teachers
- 1 part-time Special Education Teacher (2 days per week)
- 3 full-time Special Needs Assistants

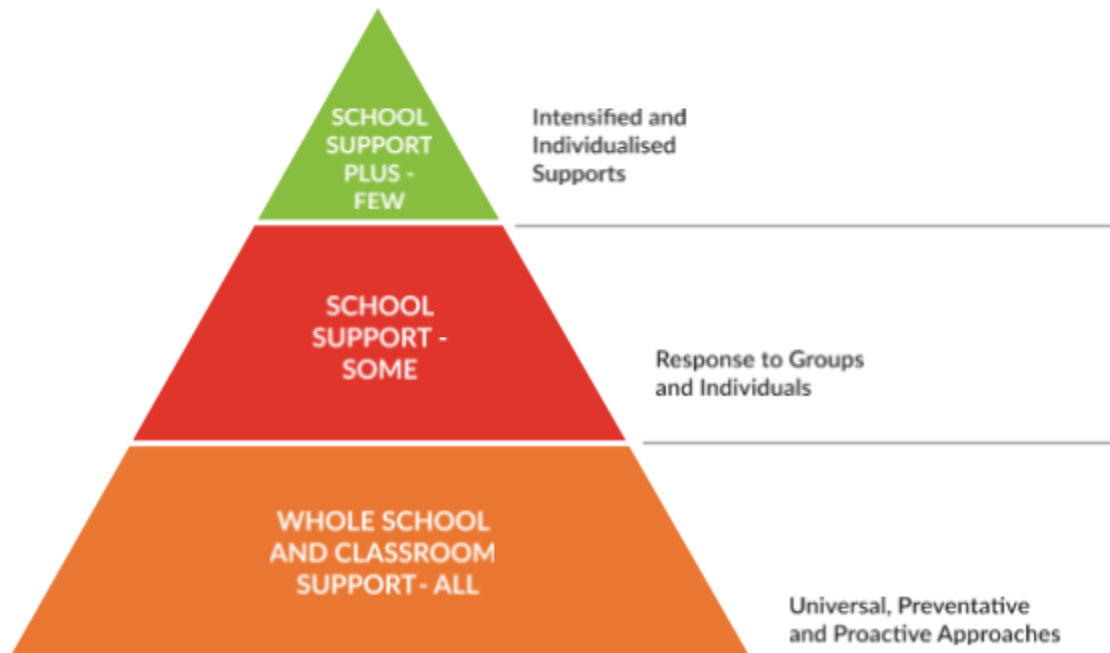
The role of **Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO)** may be delegated to a member of staff by the Principal in order to coordinate the day-to-day organisation of Special Education provision.

Staffing structures and allocations are reviewed annually in line with pupil needs and Department of Education allocations.

20.2 Appendix 2: Sample School Support Plan



STUDENT SUPPORT FILE	
Name	
Date of Birth	
School	
Date File Opened	
Date File Closed	



Developing a Support Plan is the outcome of a problem solving process, involving school staff, parent(s)/ guardian(s) and the young person. We start by identifying concerns, we gather information, we put together a plan and we review it.

Support Checklist

Name:	Age:	Class:
General Information	Date Checked	Comments
1. Parents/ Guardians Consulted		
2. Information from previous school/preschool gathered		
3. Hearing		
4. Vision		
5. Medical Needs		
6. Basic Needs Checklist completed		
7. Assessment of learning- screening		
8. Observation of learning style/approach to learning		
9. Observation of behaviour		
10. Interview with pupil		
11. Classroom work differentiated?		
12. Learning environment adapted?		
13. Yard/school environments adapted?		
14. Informal or formal consultation/advice with outside professionals?		
15. Advice given by a learning support/resource teacher or other school staff?		
16. Other interventions put in place in school?		
Action needed		

Helpful references: SEN: A Continuum of Support: Resource Pack for Teachers, pp. 13-16, 18 to 20; BESD: A Continuum of Support, p 7; A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools, Resource Pack for Teachers, pp32-36; Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools, pp20

SUPPORT PLAN

Classroom Support
School Support (Support for SOME)
School Support Plus (Support for A FEW)

Student's name		Age	
Lead teacher		Class	
Start date of plan			
Review date of plan			
Student's strengths and interests			
Priority concerns			
Possible reasons for concerns			
Targets for the student			
Strategies to help the student achieve the targets			
Staff involved and resources needed.			
Signature of parent(s)/guardian(s)			
Signature of teacher(s)			

SUPPORT REVIEW RECORD*

Classroom Support
School Support (Support for SOME)
School Support Plus (Support for A FEW)

To be completed by the teacher(s) as a review of the plan and as a guide for future actions.

For help, see *SEN: A Continuum of Support - Guidelines for Teachers*; *BESD: A Continuum of Support – Guidelines for Teachers*; *A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools, Resource pack for Teachers*; *Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools*.

Student's name	Class/ Year	
Names of those present at review	Date of Review	
What areas of the plan have been most successful and why?		
Since the start of the plan, has anything changed in relation to the original concerns? If so, what are these changes, and what have we learned from them?		
Have the student's needs changed since the start of the plan, and if so how?		
Recommended future actions – <i>what, how, who, when?</i>		
Any comments from the student?		
Any comments from the parent(s)/guardian(s)?		
Signature of parent(s)/ guardian(s)		
Signature of teacher(s)		

Outcome of review (tick as appropriate)			
	Revert to previous level of support- Support for All/ Classroom Support OR Support for Some/ School Support		Progress to next level of support- Support for Some/ School Support OR Support for a Few/ School Support Plus
	Continue at Current Level of Support		Request consultation with other professionals

20.3 Appendix 3 – *SET Support Allocation Framework*

SET Support Allocation Framework

Special Education Teacher support in Gaelscoil Phort Láirge is allocated on the basis of identified pupil needs and in accordance with the Department of Education SET Allocation Model (Circular 0013/2017).

Support is not allocated solely on the basis of diagnosis. Decisions are based on a holistic evaluation of the pupil's learning and developmental needs.

Criteria informing allocation decisions include:

- Standardised test results
- Diagnostic assessment results
- Teacher observation and professional judgement
- Evidence of pupil progress
- Level and complexity of need
- Input from parents and other professionals
- Whole-school priorities

Time allocation is reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with current pupil needs.

20.4 Appendix 4 – *Summary of Roles and Responsibilities*

Principal

Holds overall responsibility for Special Education provision, strategic leadership and compliance with legislation.

SENCO

Coordinates day-to-day organisation of Special Education provision.

Class Teacher

Has primary responsibility for teaching and assessing all pupils and implementing differentiation.

Special Education Teacher

Provides targeted interventions and supports pupil progress.

Special Needs Assistant

Supports the care and safety needs of pupils and does not have a teaching role.

20.5 Appendix 5 – *Graduated Identification Process*

Graduated Identification Process

Gaelscoil Phort Láirge follows a staged approach to identifying additional learning needs.

This includes:

1. Teacher observation
2. Classroom differentiation and support strategies
3. Consultation with the Special Education Teacher
4. Additional assessment where required
5. Development of a School Support Plan

20.6 Appendix 6 – *Graduated Response Process*

Support Process

Support is provided in accordance with the Continuum of Support framework.

Stage 1 – Classroom Support

Differentiation and support strategies implemented by the class teacher.

Stage 2 – School Support

Additional support from the Special Education Teacher and a School Support Plan.

Stage 3 – School Support Plus

More comprehensive support plans and possible involvement of external agencies.

20.7 Appendix 7 – Early Intervention Framework

Gaelscoil Phort Láirge recognises the importance of early identification and intervention.

This includes:

- Early screening in literacy and numeracy
- Observation of language and communication skills
- Classroom support strategies
- Short-term targeted interventions

The aim of early intervention is to support pupils before difficulties become more significant.

20.8 Appendix 8 – SET Decision-Making Framework

Decisions regarding SET support are made based on evidence and pupil need.

These decisions are informed by:

- Analysis of assessment data
- Professional discussion among staff
- Parental input
- Regular review of pupil progress

Support decisions are reviewed on a termly basis to ensure they continue to meet pupil needs.

21. Ratification and Review

This policy was discussed and ratified by the Board of Management of Gaelscoil Phort Láirge on the 23rd of March 2026..

The policy will be reviewed at least every five years or sooner if required due to legislative or policy changes.

Chairperson of Board of Management: *Rónán Ó hÓgartaigh*

Principal: *Fionnuala De Chnuic*