



St Ailbes N.S. Policy on the Integration and Inclusion of Special Needs Children into Mainstream classes

Introduction:

The need for a policy on inclusion developed from the collective desire of the teaching staff to have a defined and uniform whole school approach to the issue of integration. The policy was devised following consultation with all stake holders including mainstream and special class teachers and support teachers, as well as the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS). The school strives in so far as is possible to include all children in curricular learning experiences As a pathway to successful integration and inclusion for curricular subjects SEN pupils may initially be integrated /included in more social based activities such as play time, breaks and Aistear.

Rationale:

The policy was formulated so that

- Teaching and support staff have clear well defined guidelines on best practice
- there is consistency throughout the school
- optimum learning experiences are provided for all the children

Aims:

- to provide a teaching and learning experience that enables pupils with Special Needs to become exposed to learning in a mainstream setting
- to enable mainstream children to observe at close quarters, the special needs of some children in their school community
- to develop the social skills and self esteem of the Special Needs child
- to develop a sense of empathy and understanding of the needs of the Special Needs child.

Staff Roles:

Principal:

- direct responsibility for co-ordinating an effective whole school approach to integration/inclusion
- responsibility for the provision of in service training and adequate resourcing
- monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and making relevant adjustment following consultation
- working with parents and out of school agencies

Special Class Teachers:

The Special Class teachers will

- identify the appropriate curriculum area the Special Needs child should experience
- ensure S.N.A support is available during integration
- collaborate and consult with mainstream class teachers in setting realistic targets
- assume responsibility for an on going individual education plan in consultation with support services, parents and Principal

Class Teachers:

The mainstream class teachers will

- Differentiate programmes of work when necessary by task and outcome to meet the needs of the Special Class pupil
- provide a suitable seating arrangement in the mainstream setting
- collaborate with the Special Class teacher and the S.N.A

Implementation:

The school promotes a policy of integration with age appropriate peers on a social level and ability appropriate on a curriculum level

For integration/inclusion to be effective it must

- further develop social skills
- not interfere with the level of learning within each class
- be done in conjunction with and have the goodwill of the class teacher
- SNA may accompany child to support him/her while present in the mainstream class.
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The process must be open to review at all times. The school insists that a maximum of 3 children from Special Class can be integrated to a mainstream class at any given time. Early levels of integration into mainstream are on a social level only. The Special Needs child will not partake in general class learning until they have mastered the art of -

- entering the class without trepidation
- sitting down at a designated desk
- interacting on a social level with child(ren) nearest them
- re-acting to general teacher instructions within the classroom setting

Curricular Integration:

When the Special Needs child has adjusted on a social level he/she will slowly be introduced to areas of the curriculum appropriate to ability level. Aister , P.E. classes at Junior and Senior Infant level will be targeted initially. Integration into this class will continue up through the classes.

The school also designates SPHE as a curricular area open to integration. Integration into mainstream classes for school concerts can extend to additional levels of integration such as school choirs (communion), carol singing groups and school plays .

The school policy also offers Physical Education as a curricular area open to integration. The Special Needs child is integrated into the class that best suits his/her physical condition. Games are taught to all classes by an outside coach and sessions are timetabled by the school. Children from the Special classes are also integrated for mainstream school outings and mainstream activities such as Sports Day and activities in the playground,

Reverse integration:

The school operates a policy of reverse integration and this extends to all classes.

Special Needs children being integrated for core curriculum subjects such as Maths and English do so through the reverse integration route initially. This involves withdrawing 3-4 children from mainstream to work with the Special Needs child in his/her own environment. It is envisaged that this will lead to conventional integration into mainstream in the long term

- children from the Senior Classes provide reverse integration by accompanying the Special Needs children on weekly swimming sessions and on other Social Outings organised by the Special Class teachers.
- Some children from the Special classes integrate for all playtimes, throughout the school year.

Staff Development:

Opportunities for in service and staff development in relation to the implementation of a workable system of integration will be encouraged and facilitated whenever a suitable course is available

Assessment:

Assessment by observation and testing will be conducted by the class teachers covering 3 aspects of development

- social integration
- language and communication
- play and behaviour

Home - School Liaison:

Each child takes home a class diary detailing the level of integration the child has engaged in each day. The parents can then progress this aspect of their child's learning.

I.C.T:

All children will have access to a computer, I pad and interactive white board , both in mainstream and in the Special classes.

Review:

This policy will be reviewed in 2021 as more information on techniques to ensure effective integration becomes available.