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**Our Lady of Victories Girls’ National School**

**Special Educational Needs Policy**

**Introduction:**

Our Lady of Victories G.N.S. is a vertical school catering for 199 pupils from 2nd class to 6th class. On our staff we have:

* Administrative Principal
* 10 class teachers
* 85 NCSE SET hours have been allocated to OLV Girls’ School for 2021-2022 and are distributed as follows:
* 3 Full-time SET teachers
* 5 hours clustered with OLV Infant School 2022-2024
* 5 hours Part-Time teacher
* 1 shared SET teacher (legacy post with BNS- unfilled Sept 2023)
* 2 Fixed-Term EAL posts (based on enrolment 30th September 2023)
* 15 hours New Entrant EAL hours
* 4.5 SNAs

**Belief Statement:**

The Catholic school ethos is one of inclusion that validates and values individuality. We aim to promote equality of access and participation. We believe that inclusion of all children is central to the overall vision of our school. We also believe that a special needs policy is essential in order to provide direction to the staff in supporting children with special educational needs and learning difficulties.

* We have a positive attitude towards inclusive schooling. We support the inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) for whom it is in their best interests, and when all necessary support structures have been funded and put in place.
* The provision for pupils with SEN is seen as being the responsibility of the whole school staff.
* We endeavour to encourage children to achieve their full potential and leave us as well rounded, confident and caring individuals.
* We endeavour to provide an inclusive curriculum to try to ensure that each pupil has a positive educational experience, where her strengths are emphasised, and her self esteem is enhanced.
* The school strives to develop each student’s spiritual, intellectual, emotional, creative and physical potential.

**Aims:**

* to ensure that our duties, as set out in The Education Act 1998, Equal Status Act 2000, Education Welfare Act 2000 and Education for Persons with Disabilities Act 2004, are fully met, to enable children with special educational needs to join in the normal activities of the school along with children who do not have special educational needs.
* to ensure that all children gain access to a broad and balanced curriculum and have an equal opportunity to receive an education that is appropriate to their needs;
* to identify and assess children with special needs as early as possible;
* to use our resources as efficiently and equitably as possible when assessing and meeting the special educational needs of our children;
* to provide a graduated approach in order to match educational provision to children's needs;
* to develop a partnership with parents in order that their knowledge, views and experience can assist us in assessing and providing for their children;
* to take into account the ascertainable wishes of the children concerned and, whenever possible, directly involve them in decision making in order to provide more effectively for them;
* to ensure collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills in order to take effective action on behalf of children with special needs;
* to ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities towards children with special needs and are able to exercise them;
* to monitor our effectiveness in achieving the above objectives.

**Enrolment of Children with Special Educational Needs:**

 (EPSEN Act) "*A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with -*

*(a)The best interests of the child as determined in
accordance with any assessment carried out under this Act,
or*

*(b)The effective provision of education for children with
whom the child is to be educated"*

The school aims to meet the needs of any child whom the parent wishes to register at the school as long as a place is available and the admission criteria are fulfilled. The Education For Persons with Disabilities Act 2004 states that *"A child is entitled to attend the school which is most suited to his or her overall needs".*

Parents are required to notify the school of their child's special needs in advance of enrolment. The Board of Management will request a copy of the child's medical or psychological report. No child can be refused admission solely on the grounds that he has SEN except where the provision required is incompatible with that available in our school.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

In attempting to achieve the above objectives the BOM, Principal and staff will take all reasonable steps within the limits of the resources available to fulfil the requirements outlined in this policy document.

**Board of Management**

The BoM will fulfil its statutory duties towards pupils with special needs. It will ensure that the provision required is an integral part of the school development plan. Members will be knowledgeable about the school's S.E.N’s provision - funding, equipment and personnel.

**Principal**

The principal has overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of provision. She will coordinate staffing and services to ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities towards children with special needs and are able to exercise them:

* to monitor our effectiveness in achieving the above objectives.
* to meet the specific needs of pupils with broader or more specific learning difficulties.
* She will keep the BoM informed about the working of this policy.
* She will encourage members of staff to participate in training to help them meet the objectives of this policy.
* She will liaise with the SENO with regard to support hours and is responsible for personnel appointments.
* She will liaise with external agencies including the psychology services and organise assessments.
* She will liaise with the health and social services in consultation with our home school liaison teacher.
* She has responsibility for granting exemptions from Irish in consultation with the educational psychologist and parents.

**Class Teacher**

Section 22 (1) of the Education Act 1998 states the primacy of the teacher in the education and personal development of pupils in schools. The classroom teacher is responsible for educating all pupils in his/her. class, including any pupil with a special educational need.

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all pupils in his/her classroom, including pupils with special educational needs. It is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to ensure that each pupil is taught in a stimulating and supportive classroom environment where all pupils feel equal and valued.

In line with Continuum of Support Guidelines, the class teacher may gather information through formal and informal means, with a view to informing interventions. The classroom teacher also has a central role in identifying and responding to pupils with additional needs including differentiating the curriculum as appropriate. These responses will be informed and assisted by collaboration with colleagues, parents/guardians and others such as the school’s NEPS psychologist and the local Special Educational Needs Organiser.

The classroom teacher will also make specific accommodations for a pupil within the class as a result of concerns about a pupil’s progress, application, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers and the development of a programme of differentiated instruction for that pupil.

**Special Education Teachers**
They will be responsible for;

* Liaising with class teachers re SEN and the Continuum of Support
* Overseeing the day to day operation of the SEN policy
* Coordinating provision for children with special educational needs.
* Liaising with and advising fellow teachers and contributing to in service training of staff.
* Liaising with and advising SNAs with regard to supporting children with special needs
* Liaising with parents of children with special needs
* Monitoring and evaluating SEN provision
* Overseeing the records of all children with SEN and storing copies of all assessments, tests and School Support Plans/School Support Plus Plans.
* Liaising with external agencies including the psychology services

**Parents**

The views of parents will be sought at all stages of assessment and provision.

**Special Needs Assistants**

Special needs assistants are recruited specifically to assist in the care of pupils with disabilities in an educational context (Circular 71/2011 Public Service Croke Park Agreement Special Needs Assistants).

There will be ongoing liaison between the SNA, class teacher and the Support Teacher with regard to the holistic development of the pupil. The SNA will be involved in the setting of behavioural targets for their assigned pupils.

**Pupils**

The pupils will

* Inform SEN teachers of their interests, which may be used to enhance learning.
* Be included in goal setting for their IEPs/SSPP and SSP/IPLPs
* Be included in the review and ongoing target setting throughout the term/school year.

**Home School Community Liaison Coordinator**

The HSCL coordinator aims to develop a family friendly school climate. In the context of SEN/learning support they offer support to parents and encourage involvement in their child’s learning. They also develop and encourage activities that engage families in learning. The HSCL coordinator recognises that parents are the primary educators of their children and thus, are equal partners in their children’s education.

The HSCL coordinates the Care Team meetings, where the Care Team seeks to create a shared sense of purpose in responding to the needs of individual pupils who may be at risk.  The Care Team is composed of all relevant professionals regarding the child’s education and/or the child’s parents/guardians.

**Collaboration, prevention strategies and parental involvement used in meeting the educational needs of pupils**

* Whole school literacy and maths programmes have been implemented to enhance learning.
* Currently girls receiving School Support are withdrawn in small groups for targeted work on the Number strand of the Maths curriculum and targeted literacy work as per the group needs, following weekly planning meetings with class teachers. We do not operate a ‘one-size fits all’ model for maths or literacy withdrawal groups- SET teachers and class teachers will use their professional judgement in this regard.
* Support teachers provide in-class support for both Maths and Literacy.
* The ‘First Steps’ and ‘Starlight’ Literacy programme is used throughout the school.
* Big Cat levelled reading scheme used across the school.
* ‘Drop Everything and Read’ sessions in class.
* Thematic approach to planning across the curriculum
* We currently have three teachers trained in Maths Recovery and it will be used going forward mainly targeting 2nd class with the Maths Recovery teacher working both in class and with small group/individual withdrawal. Given the level of need in the school, it may be necessary to roll Maths Recovery out across 2nd-4th class.
* Class teachers, SET teachers, SNAs and principal liaise regularly with each other, as the need arises, in relation to children with special educational needs.
* Formal meetings between class teachers and SET teachers take place when School Support Plans and School Support Plus Plans are being drafted and reviewed.
* Meetings will be arranged between SET teachers and parents to discuss pupil's needs and suitable activities for home and school as outlined in the School Support Plus Plans.
* Teachers and parents meet at individual parent-teacher meetings at least once a year and as the need arises.
* The principal and the SET team will liaise and consult with the NEPS psychologist at a minimum of once a year.
* Use of 'Maths for Fun' and 'Story-time' programmes which involve parental participation in class.
* Homework journal used to liaise with parents.

**Assessment:**

The NVRT is administered to pupils in 2nd and 5th classes in October of each year.

The school currently administers the Drumcondra English and Sigma T standardised tests to classes from 2nd to 6th in May of each year.

The school currently administers the Boxall Profile Assessment on each child from 3rd- 5th in June to inform our Nurturing plan for the following school year. 2nd class children are assessed in June. New children to the school are assessed at the end of one term in the school (will depend on their enrolment date).

**Stages of Provision and Intervention:**

**Stage 1: Classroom Support**

Access to the school’s broad and balanced curriculum is achieved for most children by differentiation of class work by the class teacher. When a class teacher identifies a child with SEN the class teacher should consult with the relevant SET teacher and the child’s parents and provide interventions that are ADDITIONAL TO or DIFFERENT FROM those provided as part of the school’s usual differentiated curriculum.

The indicators for intervention could be;

* The child shows signs of difficulty in developing literacy and numeracy skills, which result in poor attainment
* The child makes little or no progress even when teaching approaches are directed at an identified area of weakness
* Standardised test results from previous years at or below the 12th percentile
* Persistent emotional or behavioural difficulties which do not respond to behaviour management techniques used by the school
* Has sensory or physical difficulties
* Has communication and/ or relationship difficulties
* Prolonged absenteeism

While the first line of responsibility for the progress of all pupils in the class lies with the class teacher, the relevant SET teacher should be familiar with, and involved in, an advisory capacity in the implementation of the differentiated curriculum*.* The class teacher opens a Classroom Support Plan for these students.

Paperwork required at Stage 1: Classroom Support Plan

**Stage 2: School Support**

If intervention within the constraints of a Classroom Support Plan has not resulted in progress **and/or** the results of standardised tests, along with teacher observation, indicate that progress is not being made, intervention in the form of small group withdrawal will be accessed. Priority for School Support is given to those pupils who perform at or below the 12th Percentile in maths and literacy assessments. Small group Nurturing Support will be offered to children prioritised by Boxall Profile Assessment analysis. These guidelines around test results are flexible and the professional judgement of the class teachers will be a crucial part of the selection process.

* The support teacher will perform a range of diagnostic tests. Tests may include visual and auditory discrimiination tests, free writing .
* On completion of diagnostic tests, and following a consultation with the class teacher and parents, the support teacher will compile a School Support Plan.
* If there are others in the class with similar difficulties in one or more of the specific areas, then a group education plan may be implemented.
* While every effort will be made to allow the SEN group to remain included in the class, there may be a need to work part of the programme in a SEN room with the SEN teacher.
* Where progress is such that the child is no longer giving cause for concern, the child will revert to the usual differentiated curriculum available to all children.

Paperwork required at Stage 2: School Support Plan

**Stage 3: School Support Plus**

The support teacher will perform diagnostic tests on Stage 2 children, as appropriate. These tests may include the CCTOPS, WRAT5, the ACE Language test and the Neale Analysis Reading Test.

When it has been identified that a child is still struggling and performing below the 12th percentile or not deriving from the education on offer, further advice may be sought from NEPS/SENO, in consultation with the child’s parents. Also, children who are not performing to an expected level (e.g. very high NVRT scoring, but lower than expected scoring in standardised testing/classroom based assessments) may be targeted with Stage 3 level support.

* An educational or psychological assessment may be arranged (see Education for Persons with Disability Act 2004)
* Other outside agencies may need to be contacted, who will advise on a range of provisions including SSP Plan targets/ strategies and programmes specific to the child’s needs.
* On receipt of a professional report confirming a specific diagnosis of Special Educational Need(s), a student will automatically fall under Stage 3: School Support Plus and a School Support Plus Plan will be prepared in consultation with the class teacher and the parents.
* The triggers for intervention at stage 3 level may be that
1. despite receiving stage 2 School Support the child makes little or no progress over a long period of time
2. the child continues to work at primary curriculum levels substantially below that of a child of a similar age
3. the child continues to have literacy and numeracy difficulties
4. the child has emotional or behavioural difficulties which substantially and regularly interfere with the child’s learning , or that of other children, despite an appropriate behaviour management programme and school support plus plan
5. the child has sensory and/or physical needs, and requires additional specialist equipment or regular visitors from an advisory service
6. the child has ongoing communication or relationship difficulty that prevents social development, and acts as a barrier to learning.
* If the psychologist recommends an exemption from the curricular area of Gaeilge and/or the child is entitled to an exemption under circular 52/2019, the principal will assist parents with the application process at the earliest opportunity.

Paperwork required at Stage 3: School Support Plus Plan

**School Support Plus Plan**

Based on professional reports and recommendations and records of differentiation the SET teacher, the class teacher, parents and representatives of outside agencies (if appropriate), formulate a School Support Plus Plan. These SSPPs, which employ a small-steps approach, feature significantly in the provision that we make in the school. By breaking down the existing levels of attainment into finely graded targets, we ensure that the child experiences success.

This plan includes:

* the nature and degree of the child's abilities and skills
* the degree of the child's special needs,
* the present level of performance,
* services to be provided,
* services for transition to 2nd level school
* the goals, which the child is to achieve.

The strategies set out in the SSPP will, as far as possible, be implemented in the normal classroom setting. The management of the SSPP strategies will be the responsibility of the class teacher, SET teacher and the principal.

**Review of SSPPs**

Reviews will be conducted in Jan/Feb and the beginning of June. The SET teacher will consult with the class teacher, the child (and SNA if applicable) and agree on the expected outcomes of the SSPP. The parents are invited to attend a meeting to discuss or make recommendations that they would like to see included in the SSPP. Again, outside agencies may play a part in formulating the final copy. Where progress is satisfactory it may be decided that the child remains at School Support Plus stage. Where the child is consistently achieving targets over time, a decision will be made to revert to Stage 2; School Support. There will be a review in June to plan for the next teacher in September. It will be carried out as outlined above.

**Inclusion**

We are fully committed to the principle of inclusion and good practice, which makes it possible. Our policy, as set out in this document, will enable children with SEN to be an integral part of our school community. This will be achieved by careful consideration of the needs of each child and by either modifying activities or by providing support that will help the child to participate in them.

**Record Keeping**

* Daily records of work completed are kept by the SET teachers, as are weekly/fortnightly plans.
* Classroom Support Plans, SSPs and SSPPs are all stored on our online individual green folders, and available to all members of the team involved with each child..
* Parents are asked to read through and sign all SET plans pertaining to their child.
* Class teachers keep class records.
* Copies of the school's standardised test results are kept by the principal and are available on the shared drive.
* Copies of assessments are kept by the principal, class teachers and SET teachers- ‘green folders’.
* When a pupil transfers to post primary school or to another primary school, relevant records/reports are forwarded on (with parental consent)
* Test results, assessment reports and relevant files are kept in the school until former pupils reach the age of twenty-one.

Parents are informed in writing when a decision to discontinue supplementary teaching is taken. Such a decision is reached when a pupil has scored above the 12th percentile and performs satisfactorily in diagnostic tests. Progress of such pupils is monitored as some pupils may need support again in the future.

**Review of Policy**

The policy will be reviewed regularly

**Ratified by the Board of Management on**

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**Date**

**Signed**

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**Chairperson, Board of Management**