

Columba College

Learning Support / Special Educational Needs Policy

[October 2013]

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Columba College endeavours to respond to the educational needs of all its pupils. 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 develop into caring and responsible adults and to realise their full potential. Columba College 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.

- 1.2 The school 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 students who have learning support/special educational needs. The school is committed to the highest standards to ensure that all students achieve to their true abilities in an inclusive environment. All staff are committed to supporting and nurturing students, and to supporting their families and those who work with them, where appropriate. The best possible working practices are based on respect, trust, honesty and integrity.

2. AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 As set out in The Education Act 1998, The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004 our aims are to:
 - a) Give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children including children who have a disability or who have other special educational needs, as they relate to education.

 - b) Provide that, as far as is practicable and having regard to the resources available, a level and quality of education appropriate to the needs and abilities of the people of the state.

c) Ensure that people with special educational needs are educated in an inclusive environment, as far as is possible.

d) Affirm that people with special educational needs have the same right to avail of, and benefit from education as children who do not have those needs

e) Provide for the greater involvement of parents in the education of their children and decision-making.

f) To ensure that our school cooperates and works closely with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the Health Services Executive with regard to the education of people with special educational needs, and the Special Education Appeals Board - where decisions made about the education of people with special educational needs can be appealed.

g) To ensure that our school does not discriminate in relation to:

- The admission or the terms and conditions of admission of a student
- The access of a student to any course, facility or benefit provided
- Any other term or condition of participation in the school by the student.
- The expulsion of a student or any other sanction

2.2 To ensure that students with leaning 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.

2.3 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.

2.4 To ensure that literacy / numeracy is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.

2.5 To ensure that learning support/special educational needs is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.

2.6 To ensure that students with leaning support/special educational needs are offered a broad, balanced, relevant, progressive, continuous and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.

2.7 To ensure, in as far as is practicable, that all students, including those with special educational needs, leave school with an adequate level of certification to enable them enter the work place or further education, as appropriate.

- 2.8 To encourage the creation of a caring, welcoming, stable and stimulating environment in all of the school, which encourages each child to develop intellectually, socially, morally, and physically according to their abilities.
- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 To ensure that the achievement of students with learning support/special educational needs is recognised, celebrated and encouraged.
- 2.11 To develop staff expertise in supporting students with learning support/special educational needs.
- 2.12 To encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at school and at home.
- 2.13 To ensure a commitment to informed decision-making based on secure evidence.
- 2.14 To co-ordinate the advice, guidance and support of other agencies in supporting students with learning support/special educational needs.
- 2.15 To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources.
- 2.16 To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of practice in support of students with learning support/special educational needs.

3. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- 3.1 This policy applies to all students attending Columba College and who have learning support/special educational needs, in either short or long term.

4. THE LEGAL CONTEXT

- 4.1 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 Boards of Management by
 - 4.1.1. The Education Act 1998
 - 4.1.2 The Education (Welfare) Act 2000
 - 4.1.3 The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
 - 4.1.4 The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004

- 4.2 This policy is also drafted in consideration of the Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill 2003.

5. DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 The statutory definition of “disability” in Section 2(1) of the Education Act 1998 is as follows:
- a) 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
 - b) The presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness, or
 - c) The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person’s body, or
 - d) A condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or
 - e) A condition, illness or disease which affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or which results in disturbed behaviour.

5.3

5.3.1 Section 1 of the Education of Persons with Disabilities Bill 2003 defines a child with Special Educational Needs as a child who, due to a disability, is unable to benefit from an ordinary school programme without special classes or other special educational services.

5.3.2 Section 1 of the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act defines special educational needs in the following terms:

“Special educational needs means (in relation to a person) a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition...”

- 5.4 In consideration of the statutory definition at 5.2 above our school considers a student as being in need of learning support if he/she:

- 5.4.1 Is recognised as being at the 10th percentile or below on a standardized test and following a personal profile investigation by the relevant professional personnel.
- 5.4.2 Is failing to achieve in school due to specific personal circumstances.
- 5.5 In consideration of the statutory definition at 5.3 above, our school 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:
 - 5.5.1 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 any other similar class.
 - 5.5.2 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.
- 5.6 This school 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 any other similar class.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 The Trustee

Strives to promote and establish educational inclusion in this school in keeping with the school's mission statement which seeks to provide for the learning needs of all pupils to allow them to achieve their full potential and enable them to develop as caring and responsible adults/citizens capable of contributing to and fulfilling their roles in the community and society.

6.2 Board of Management

- 6.2.1 To ensure that all students with learning support/special educational needs are identified and assessed.
- 6.2.2 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.
- 6.2.3 To ensure that a broad, balanced, relevant, progressive, continuous and differentiated curriculum is provided in the school to ensure (in as far

as is practicable) that students with special educational needs leave school with the skills necessary to participate to the level of their capacity in an inclusive way in society and to live independently in their adult lives.

- 6.2.4 To ensure that necessary resources are sought on behalf of students with learning support/special educational needs.
- 6.2.5 To ensure that a learning support/special educational needs co-ordinator is appointed from among the teaching staff.
- 6.2.6 To promote the development of positive partnership with parents and other relevant agencies/personnel and to ensure that parents are informed of their child's special educational needs and how those needs are being met.
- 6.2.7 To ensure that parents are consulted with regard to, and invited to participate in, the making of all significant decisions concerning their child's education.
- 6.2.8 To ensure that the Learning Support/Special Educational Needs Policy forms part of the School Plan.
- 6.2.9 To develop a whole school approach to literacy and numeracy as required under Section 14 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.
- 6.2.10 To ensure that an awareness of special educational needs is inculcated in students in the school.

6.3 The Principal

(Cf. D.E.S. Inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs: Post Primary Guidelines, 2007, p. 67-71)

- 6.3.1 On behalf of the Trustee and 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. As outlined in Section 18 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, the Principal may delegate certain functions to appropriate teachers.
- 6.3.2 To appoint a learning support / special educational needs co-ordinator from among the teaching staff and to work closely with the co-ordinator.
- 6.3.3 The Principal, in cooperation with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator, shall ensure that an Individual Learning Plan is prepared for each student with special educational needs in the school.

- 6.3.4 On drafting or reviewing such plans as specified at 6.3.2 above, the Principal shall ensure that cognisance is taken, at the appropriate time, of the needs of the student to continue his/her education or training on becoming an adult.
- 6.3.5 To inform the Board of Management of issues, which are relevant to learning support/special educational needs.
- 6.3.6 In consultation with the learning support/special educational needs co-ordinator and other relevant personnel to liaise with 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.
- 6.3.7 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.
- 6.3.8 Physical Resources allocated to a student shall remain the property of Columba College at all times.
- 6.3.9 To establish a “Special Needs Support Team” within the school with a specific remit to ensure identification of (and support for) students with learning support/special educational needs. (See Appendix 1)
- 6.3.10 To actively promote a whole school approach to learning support and special educational needs and to make all staff aware of their responsibilities in this area as outlined in section 6.5 and to organize appropriate staff development in this area.

6.4 Learning Support / Special Education Needs Coordinator

(Cf. D.E.S. Inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs 2007, p. 76-77)

- 6.4.1 The strategic role of the Learning Support/Special Educational Needs Coordinator is:
 - a) To have an overview of the management of the provision that is being provided in the school
 - b) To be the first point of contact on behalf of the Teachers and Special Needs Assistants when communicating to the Principal.
 - c) To facilitate effective systems of communication between all staff and colleagues involved in the provision.

- d) To ensure all staff and colleagues involved are working within school policy in relation to /Special Educational Needs.
- e) To ensure that school policy and practice has regard for the integrity of the work the staff are doing.
- f) To facilitate and chair the meeting schedule for the Special Needs Support Team.
- g) To assist staff in overcoming barriers to their work and offering guidance.
- h) To ensure that all provision in the school has the effect of integrating the student into a safe, secure and supportive learning environment.
- i) To ensure that all action taken supports a student's progress, well being and learning.
- j) To be aware of issues of attendance and child protection as they relate to Special Educational Needs and refer such issues of concern in relation to child protection to the Designated Liaison Person in the school as appropriate.

- 6.4.2 To supervise 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.
- 6.4.3 To engage in personal professional development.
- 6.4.4 To liaise with and advise other teachers.
- 6.4.5 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.
- 6.4.6 To manage special needs assistants under the direction of the Principal.
- 6.4.7 To oversee the records of all students with learning support/special educational needs.
- 6.4.8 To liaise with parents of students with learning support/special educational needs.
- 6.4.9 To facilitate the in-service needs and training of staff.
- 6.4.10 To ensure the distribution of suitable learning resources and teaching aids, subject to those resources and teaching aids being made available by the Department of Education and Skills or other agencies.
- 6.4.11 To liaise with external agencies including primary schools, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Health Boards and Voluntary Bodies.

- 6.4.12 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.
- 6.4.13 To co-ordinate the provision for students with learning support / special educational needs, and keep a register of needs and provision, with particular reference to 6.3.4 above.

6.5 General Teaching Staff

(Cf. D.E.S. Inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs p. 72-73)

- 6.5.1 To make provision for students with learning support/special educational needs in their classes and subject areas.
- 6.5.2 To use resources effectively and efficiently and to be accountable for the use of resources.
- 6.5.3 To be part of a whole school approach in relation to Special Educational Needs as well as literacy/numeracy.
- 6.5.4 To develop policy and practice and to work towards the achievement of excellence in all aspects of his/her work
- 6.5.5 To develop a positive ethos in the classroom for fostering an inclusive approach to meeting the social and educational needs of all students including students with special educational needs. To identify personal training needs and to secure training where needed. This will be supported by school management subject to the availability of adequate resources.

6.6 Parents

(Cf. D.E.S. Inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs p. 80-82)

- 6.61 To work in positive partnership with the school and other agencies.
- 6.62 To support and encourage their child in his/her education.
- 6.63 The school has a responsibility under Section 14 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 to:
 - a) Inform parents of their child's special educational needs and how those needs are being met.
 - b) Consult parents with regard to the making of all decisions of a significant nature concerning their child's education and invite them to participate in such decisions.
- 6.6.4 In addition, schools have the following responsibilities to parents:
 - c) To provide training to staff on good communication and relationships with parents

- d) To develop positive relationships with parents.
- e) To ensure that parents' views are heard and understood.

6.7 Special Needs Assistants:

(Cf. D.E.S. Inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs, p. 83)

- 6.7.1 Special Needs Assistants (SNA's) work closely with and under the direction of the Principal and the learning support/special educational needs coordinator and the individual subject teachers in the implementation of the school's policy as it relates to individual students or groups of students. In particular, SNAs play a very important role in the health and safety of the student/s and in his/her/their social and emotional development.
- 6.7.2 The duties of Special Needs Assistants are assigned by the Principal in accordance with the guidelines of the Department of Education and Science.
- 6.7.3 Their work should be supervised either by the Principal or by the Special Needs Coordinator or by a relevant subject teacher
- 6.7.4 Their duties involve tasks of a non-teaching nature such as:
 - Assisting students write, take notes and write down homework etc.
 - Assisting students to board and alight from school buses.
 - Where necessary, travelling as escort on school buses may be required.
 - Special assistance (as necessary) for students with particular difficulties e.g. helping physically disabled students with typing or writing.
 - Assisting with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene.
 - Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks and similar activities.
 - Assisting the teachers in the supervision of students with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods.
 - Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom.
 - Generally assisting the subject teachers, under the direction of the Principal and/or the Special Educational Needs Coordinator, with duties of a *non-teaching nature*.

- Where a Special Needs Assistant has been appointed to assist a school in catering for a specific student, duties should be modified to support the particular needs of the student concerned.

6.7.5 Special Needs Assistants may not act either as substitute or temporary teachers. In no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class.

6.7.6 Special Needs Assistants should not have access to student files except under the supervision of the Principal or the Special Needs Coordinator or a relevant subject teacher.

6.8 Learning Support & Resource Teachers

(Cf. D.E.S. Inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs p. 73-77)

6.8.1 Learning support teachers provide diagnostic assessments, monitoring and advice to teachers, students and parents as well as direct teaching for students who have learning support needs.

6.8.2 The work of the Learning Support teacher can be divided into the following key areas:

a) Assessment and identification of students with special needs.

b) Consultation: Recommending and devising appropriate materials for students in terms of concepts, relevance, readability, layout and presentation; consulting with colleagues on appropriate methodology to help obviate learning barriers; consulting with colleagues to devise a range of teaching and learning strategies; contributing to cross-curricular issues concerned with the broader ideas of learning and teaching throughout the school which will influence school policy.

c) In-Class Support: In-class support is planned work with a group of children where two or more teachers are working together.

d) Withdrawal

e) Liaising with external support services

f) Participating in staff development: By taking part in the formulation of whole school policy; organising and providing in-service, thus raising staff awareness in relation to relevant issues and theories; working directly with subject departments on curricular development to make the curriculum more accessible and relevant to all students.

g) Participating in curriculum development

h) Liaison with Primary Schools

1) Liaison with parents

- 6.8.3 Resource teachers provide diagnostic assessments, as appropriate 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.
- 6.8.4 Resource Teachers assist schools in providing support for students with special educational needs by:
- (a) Assessing and recording student needs and progress;
 - (b) Setting specific, time-related targets for each student and agreeing these with the subject teacher, principal and/or the Special Needs Coordinator;
 - (c) Direct teaching of the student, either in a separate room or within the mainstream class;
 - (d) Team-teaching - as deemed appropriate;
 - (e) Advising subject teachers in regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, suitable use of textbooks, use of Informational Information Technology and suitable software and a range of other related matters.
 - (f) Meeting and advising parents, when necessary, accompanied by the subject teacher, Principal and / or the Special Needs Coordinator, as necessary.
 - (g) Short meetings with other relevant professionals, in the students' interest -e.g. psychologists, speech and language therapists, visiting teachers, special school or special class teachers.
- 6.8.5 Resource and learning support teachers should be involved in the development and delivery, or the organisation of delivery, of Individual Learning Plans, and in the context of a whole school approach to the issue.

7. INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEEDS:

- 7.1 The school through, its normal operating procedures, shall ensure that adequate additional teaching and resource support is applied for and allocated as per the regulations of the Department of Education and Science.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING SUPPORT/SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

- 8.1 This school's learning support/special educational needs policy will describe its arrangements for identifying students with learning support/special educational needs. We hope to identify as soon as possible difficulties that can be supported, or special needs that require adapted intervention.
- 8.2 The identification process will usually involve the following:
- 8.2.1 Liaison with Primary Schools
 - 8.2.2 Specific section on the admissions/enrolment form
 - 8.2.3 Liaison with parents
 - 8.2.4 Observations by the subject, pastoral care team and guidance counsellor as appropriate.
 - 8.2.5 Formal assessments/testing.
- 8.3 Under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, each student assessed as having a special educational need will require an Individual Learning Plan.

9. ASSESSMENTS

- 9.1 The school aspires that students will be assessed as follows:
- 9.1.1 Standardised diagnostic testing on entry to the school is deemed appropriate.
 - 9.1.2 Assessment through teaching in general subject areas.
 - 9.1.3 Informal in-house assessment.
 - 9.1.4 Follow up assessment and testing relevant to 8.1.1 above.
 - 9.1.5 Referral to the National Educational Psychological Service as appropriate.
 - 9.1.6 Parental consent must be sought for psychological assessments as per the NEPS model of service.
 - 9.1.7 Should parents ask for an assessment to be carried out on their child, the school should make the necessary arrangements for such an assessment having due regard to other similar requests being made.
 - 9.1.8 Original records of such assessments shall be maintained in the school as the property of the school and shall not be removed from the

school under any circumstances.

10. INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLANS

- 10.1 The Individual Learning Plan is a special programme written by the school so that each child can work at improving their skills and knowledge at their own pace. The SPECIAL NEEDS COORDINATOR and other relevant teachers should consult with parents and subject teachers about the Individual Learning Plan that they are developing.
- 10.2 This programme will set learning targets and it is important that they are **SMART**:
- a) **S**pecific (that the targets are very precise)
 - b) **M**easurable (it can be seen if a target has been achieved)
 - c) **A**greed by all (parents, student and school)
 - d) **R**ealistic (can be achieved by the student)
 - e) **T**ime related (that the targets will be met in a set time)
- 10.3 The Individual Learning Plan should include the following:
- a) A description of the student's special educational needs
 - b) Targets to be achieved in a given time
 - c) The special educational provision (staff involved, frequency of support, specific programmes, activities, materials/equipment)
 - d) Help from home - agreed homework, how often, how long.
 - e) Expected input from student
 - f) Any other support needs (e.g. medical or counselling)
 - g) Monitoring and assessment arrangements (how is it checked?)
 - h) Review date and arrangements

11 RESOURCES

- 11.1 Application for Additional Resources:

11.1.1 The school is committed to the provision of human, physical and practical resources in a fair, equitable, open and transparent manner.

11.1.2 The school will make application to the Department of Education and Science for additional resources on behalf of 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.

11.1.3 Once the Department of Education and Science hands down its decision to the school this will be communicated to the student and parents.

11.1.4 The school may wish to appeal Department of Education and Science decisions.

11.1.5 All communication with Department of Education and Science on matters of resource provision should be made through the Principal's office.

11.1.6 Should a student in receipt of resource support leave the school for whatever reason, the Principal should notify the Department of Education and Science with immediate effect and teaching resources applicable to said student should be discontinued.

11.2 Deployment of Resources

11.2.1 The school, through allocation of resources, seeks to empower staff to meet the needs of students. It expects resources to be deployed 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. Teachers will be requested to make regular reports on the deployment of resources.

12. PROVISION

12.1 In addition to 6.8.1, 6.8.2, & 6.8.3 above the school aspires to meet the needs of students with learning support/special educational needs through the totality of learning opportunities that they provide.

12.2 The school aspires to keep 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.

12.3 The school also aspires to have in place:

- a) Policies for learning support/special needs, including curriculum delivery, behaviour management, the assessment and monitoring of student's progress and attendance, as well as systems for monitoring and evaluating provision for learning support/special educational needs.
- b) Systems for detecting learning support/special educational needs and for communicating them to all staff who will be in contact with the student.
- c) Timetabling provision for Learning Support teachers in compliance with the terms of CL 33/79
- d) Appropriate pro-rata time allocations in respect of meetings, assessments and coordination for the Special Needs Coordinator and resource teachers, as appropriate.
- e) A Pastoral Care system that offers support to students.
- f) Access for students with learning support/special educational needs to appropriate facilities.
- g) A counselling service for students.
- h) Access to appropriate information technology and other appropriate equipment and aids.
- i) Individualised Education Plans, as appropriate.
- j) Systems offering access to external support agencies.
- k) A system for ensuring that all additional resources are used for the specified target group and are not subsumed into the general teacher allocation for the school.

13. PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

- 13.1 The school encourages teachers and parents to work in close partnership with each other in the identification of need, the setting of educational targets and working with the child.
- 13.2 The school affirms that parents of students with special educational needs will be informed of such needs and how they are being met. In addition, parents must be involved in all significant decisions relating to their child's education.
- 13.3 The school aspires to provide frequent opportunities for parents to discuss progress and to express their views about the way in which their child's needs should be met.
- 13.4 Wherever possible, students will be included in discussion and decision-making regarding identification, target setting and progress.
- 13.5 The school places great emphasis on transparency in all matters relating to the student's learning support/special educational needs. Therefore, parents will have access, in the prescribed manner, to all records regarding their child.

14. NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION (NCSE)

14.1 The school is committed to working in a positive partnership, as outlined in Section 14 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, with NCSE whose functions inter alia include:

(a) The dissemination to staff, parents and such other persons as the school considers appropriate information relating to best practice, nationally and internationally, concerning the education of children with special educational needs;

(b) consultation with professionals, Health Service Executive and such other persons as the school considers appropriate to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs;

(c) consultation with staff and with such persons as the school considers appropriate to plan for the integration of education for students with special educational needs with education for students generally.

(d) to make available to the parents of children with special educational needs information in relation to their entitlements and the entitlements of their children

(e) to ensure that the progress of students with special educational needs is monitored and that it is reviewed at regular intervals.

(f) to assess and review the resources required in relation to educational provision for children with special educational needs;

(g) to ensure that a continuum of special educational provision is available as required in relation to each type of disability.

14.2 The Special Education Appeals Board and mediation

14.2.1 The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 provides for alternative methods of dispute resolution and encourages a move away from the Courts as the forum for redress. A Special Education Appeals Board is to be established for the resolution of disputes and the determination of appeals. The Act also provides for a process of mediation following the exhaustion of any rights of appeal under the legislation. The school affirms its commitment to cooperate with such processes.

15 NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE (NEPS)

- 15.1 The school is committed to working in a positive partnership with NEPS whose goals inter alia include:
 - 15.1.1 To provide direct contact and services to children and young people who need the support of an educational psychologist.
 - 15.1.2 To provide a consultancy service aimed at developing competencies and effective use of resources in the educational setting.
 - 15.1.3 To develop a well thought out model of service that balances prevention, assessment and systems work.
 - 15.1.4 To engage in individual casework with students with special needs.
 - 15.1.5 To collaborate with others in devising and evaluating appropriate intervention for such students.
 - 15.1.6 To provide a consultancy service to teachers and parents of students with special needs.
 - 15.1.7 To contribute to whole school planning in relation to the inclusion of children with disabilities.
 - 15.1.8 To support schools in the development of whole school approaches to such issues as disability, specific learning difficulties, behavioural management, bullying and responses to critical incidents.
 - 15.1.9 To contribute to relevant professional development programmes for teachers.

16 NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT (NCCA)

- 16.1 The school is committed to working in a positive partnership with NCCA, with particular reference to its draft guidelines. The goals of NCCA inter alia include:
 - 16.1.1 Inclusion and access to a broad and balanced curriculum
 - 16.1.2 A collaborative approach
 - 16.1.3 Planning and skills development
 - 16.1.4 A structured approach to assessment
 - 16.1.5 The development of Individual Learning Plans

17 THE EDUCATIONAL WELFARE BOARD

- 17.1 The Educational Welfare Board works within the framework of The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and is primarily concerned with statutory responsibilities, including those of Board of Management, for ensuring school attendance and participation.
- 17.2 The school is committed to working in partnership with the Educational Welfare Board and with Educational Welfare Officer to ensure effective attendance at and participation in school.

18 EXCEPTIONALLY ABLE STUDENTS

- 18.1 The school accepts that exceptionally able students have particular needs. Therefore, we aspire to put in place accurate assessment systems, flexible planning and provision, responsive pastoral supports and monitoring strategies.
- 18.2 While many very able students stand out because of their all-round ability and performance in examinations some may be passed over.
- 18.3 The school aspires to have adequate identification structures in place to meet this challenge.
- 18.4 Identification of students with high ability comes from a successful amalgamation of evidence from a variety of sources including assessments and diagnostic tests, observations and class work.
- 18.5 Exceptionally able students have special educational needs. Because regular schoolwork may not provide sufficient challenge they may experience boredom, which can lead to frustration at school. In addition, many may feel isolated and uncomfortable with their ability. This can lead to them under-achieving in school in an effort to conform. There are several approaches that can be of help and sometimes a combination of all of these may be needed.
 - a) Differentiation: keep the student with their usual age group, but provide different material
 - b) Open ended project work.
 - c) Special classes: Have special classes available for a group of high ability students, perhaps on a weekly basis.
 - d) Enrichment Activities: Providing access to activities such as lunchtime clubs e.g. chess, astronomy, quizzes, debates, music groups, drama. Particularly try to facilitate students meeting others with similar interests even if they are in different year groups.

e) Avoid giving the student repetitious work: Most high ability students do not need a high level of repetitive work. Before introducing a new topic, check if anyone in the group already knows the area. If you can establish that a student understands fully the new concept, have backup material ready for them. If students have some ongoing project work, it can be helpful to let them work on that while the rest of the class is carrying out repeated examples.

19 WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES

19.1 The school will aspire to promote multi-agency collaboration in order to provide a high quality service to students, families and schools. These agencies include:

- a) Primary Schools
- b) Social Services
- c) General Practitioners
- d) Health Boards
- e) Juvenile Liaison Officer
- f) Gardai
- g) Adult Learning Centre
- h) Dyslexia Association (DAI).
- i) Voluntary Organisations
- j) Local development and partnership groups
- k) Co. Library Services
- l) National Educational Psychological Service. (NEPS)
- m) Enable Ireland
- n) NTDI
- o) Youthreach

20. LEARNING SUPPORT/RESOURCE TEACHERS TEAM

- 20.1 The school aspires to organise a Learning Support/Resource Teachers' Network for teachers which will have following objectives:
 - 20.1.1 To improve morale and avoid isolation through a structured system of support.
 - 20.1.2 To exchange ideas and information about developments and resources relevant to learning support/special educational needs.
 - 20.1.3 To share resources, where practicable.
 - 20.1.4 To identify and meet in-service needs.
 - 20.1.5 To promote membership of ILSA, IATSE and other relevant organisations and to encourage attendance at courses, seminars and conferences.
 - 20.1.6 To create links with other associations such as DAI etc.
 - 20.1.7 To set guidelines for best practice.
 - 20.1.8 To monitor the School's Policy in the area of learning support/special educational needs.

21. ACCESS FOR PERSONS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES:

- 21.1 The school aspires to promote understanding of the needs of people with physical disabilities.
- 21.2 The school aspires 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.
- 21.3 The school is committed to educating all students in such a way that discriminatory behaviour of any kind is addressed.
- 21.4 The school is committed to providing for the particular needs of the physically disabled. This must be done in consideration of the availability of essential resources in this area.
- 21.5 The school seeks, through the Department of Education and Science, to have its sites adapted to ensure total accessibility for the physically disabled.
- 21.6 School management is required to recognise the needs of the physically disabled, when designing curricula and drafting timetables.
- 21.7 The school 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.

22. DISCRIMINATION ON GROUNDS OF DISABILITY

- 22.1 The Equal Status Acts 2000-2004 set out certain activities that do not constitute discrimination. The following relate to discrimination on the grounds of disability:
- 22.2 Schools may make different arrangements for sport for children on the basis of age, gender or disability if these are reasonably necessary.
- 22.3 Schools will not be considered to discriminate against a student with a disability if compliance with the provisions of the legislation would have a seriously detrimental effect on or make impossible the provision of services to other students.
- 22.4 In certain circumstances, discrimination on the grounds of disability can occur if there is a failure to do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability. If a person with a disability cannot avail of a service without the provision of special treatment or facilities then the service provider may be required to provide such special arrangements if there is only a nominal cost involved.
- 22.5 The Act includes a provision that clarifies that the nominal cost issue does not prejudice or dilute the various provisions in the Education Act, 1998, in relation to children with a disability. It should be noted that these provisions all relate to the use of public funds. This means that private schools are only obliged to make special provision for children with disabilities if there is only a nominal cost involved.

23 SUPPORT FOR STAFF

- 23.1 Columba College is committed to the provision of support for staff in relation to on-going in-service training.

24 THE SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICE (SESS)

- 24.1 In September 2003, the Department established the Special Education Support Service (SESS) to manage, co-ordinate and develop a range of supports in response to the identified training needs of teachers. The SESS, which is hosted in Laois Education Centre, provides a nationwide service to teachers and special needs assistants. As part of its response to the growing demand from teachers for support and training, the SESS has developed teams of trainers to deliver training in four specific areas: Autism, Challenging Behaviour, Dyslexia and Inclusion. This training will be delivered locally

through the Education Centre network. The school welcomes this initiative and affirms its support for it. This service can be accessed at www.sess.ie

25. REVIEW AND EVALUATION

- 25.1 The Learning Support/Resource Team shall review this policy regularly.
- 25.2 The following criteria shall be considered essential for the successful implementation of the policy:
- 25.3 The acceptance by the entire school community of the aims, objectives and principles as outlined in the policy.
- 25.4 The fulfilment of roles and responsibilities, as outlined in the policy.
- 25.5 Compliance with identification, inclusion and provision measures as set out in the policy.
- 25.6 The completion of an annual report form on learning support/special educational needs provision as appropriate.

26 SUMMARY

- 26.1 This policy is based on the following key principles:
 - 26.1.1 All students with learning support/special educational needs will be identified as early as possible.
 - 26.1.2 There will be positive partnership with parents with regard to identification of and provision for students with learning support/special educational needs.
 - 26.1.3 There will be a whole school approach to issues of identification and provision in this school.
 - 26.1.4 The school will encourage inclusive education for students with learning support/special educational needs.
 - 26.1.5 There will be close co-operation with all agencies to ensure a multi-agency approach to support.
 - 26.1.6 There will be targeted programmes of professional training and development.
 - 26.1.7 There will be a support network for teachers working in this area.
 - 26.1.8 There will be systems in place for the resourcing of staff in relation to students with learning support/special educational needs within a

realistic understanding of resource availability from the Department of Education and Skills.

- 26.1.9 There will be regular review of policy and practice in relation to all issues pertaining to learning support/special educational needs in the school.

APPENDIX 1

THE SPECIAL NEEDS SUPPORT TEAM

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- a) To identify students with special educational needs as soon as possible following their enrolment in the school
- b) To ensure that assessment procedures are clear and that they are adhered to.
- c) To improve SEN advice and support.
- d) To raise the skills and awareness of staff.
- e) To explore the broadening of opportunities in mainstream education.
- f) The personalisation of learning for children with SEN.
- g) The access of information on how well children with SEN are progressing in school.
- h) To encourage the development of a flexible curriculum and recognised qualifications for all.
- i) To encourage the involvement of students with SEN in decision making.
- j) The examination of opportunities for progression beyond school for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- k) To Monitor progress and support improvements in the school.
- l) To build parents' confidence in mainstream education.
- m) To investigate and plan for best practice in relation to all aspects of SEN, including methodologies, involvement of parents, student motivation and staff development.
- n) To improve availability of health and social services and to organise services around the needs of children and their families.

APPENDIX 2

STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSION - GENERAL

Definition

- 1 Inclusion in education is a process of maximising participation and removing barriers to learning for all children and young people in their local educational setting. A commitment to appropriate inclusion involves valuing diversity, understanding difficulties and recognising and respecting individual differences so all can feel that they belong.
- 2 Inclusion involves ensuring that, wherever appropriate, children and young people will be educated within their local mainstream school.

Context

- 1 In 2004 the general principle that children with Special Educational Needs should normally be educated at mainstream schools was enshrined in law (Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004). Columba College subscribes to this general principle.
- 2 The school's policy on this issue is led by national and international legislation which has placed progressively greater emphasis on: -
 - the education of all pupils in their local community
 - the rights of all children to have their views and needs heard
 - parents as partners in decisions making regarding the education of their children

Values

Columba College believes that children and young people should be educated within their local mainstream school wherever appropriate.

1. The school celebrates the diversity that exists at local level. We are committed to equality of opportunity and to developing inclusive practices in education within the overall framework of social inclusion.
2. The school believes that all students have an entitlement to equality of access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. We recognise the need to pay particular attention to children and young people who are educationally vulnerable. This includes children and young people who are at risk of social exclusion or underachievement and those who are gifted and talented. We are committed to removing barriers that exclude children and young people from any opportunity to reach their full potential in whatever setting.
3. The school is committed to promoting an inclusive educational system.
4. The school is committed to preventative practice that includes early identification of need, and early intervention and support for children and young people.
5. The school commits itself to increased educational and social participation for all children and young people, especially those who are educationally vulnerable:
 - Students with special educational needs
 - Students whose first language is not English
 - Travellers, refugee and asylum seekers
 - Children and young people in public care
 - Gifted and talented students
 - Students with physical difficulties
 - Vulnerable groups, for example: young carers, pregnant teenagers, children from families under stress, children with persistent medical and health needs, children with poor school attendance etc.
6. In accordance with this Special Educational Needs Policy, and other relevant legislation, the school will:
 - Meet the needs of all children/young people in mainstream education settings, where appropriate and advisable.
 - Consult with parents in relation to decisions about their child's educational progress, provision and placement.
 - Listen to, and take into account, the wishes of children and young people regarding decisions about their educational progress, provision and placement.

- 7 The school recognises that mainstream education will not always be right for every child or young person all of the time. We aim to ensure that all children are placed in appropriate educational settings through liaison by the school with Special Schools and other relevant education providers.