

### **(1) AIM**

The Special Educational Needs policy aims to ensure that any student who has been assessed as having a special educational need, or special educational needs has access to the same curriculum that is provided for all students. This is in accordance with the Education For Persons with Special Needs Act 2004.

In order to fulfil this aim, it must be recognised that these students may need extra support in whatever way the school can best provide it and within the limits of the resources allocated by the Department of Education and Science. The Special Educational Needs policy is an integral part of our Mission Statement and Admissions Policy with regard to discrimination and equality of access for all students.

### **(2) DEFINITION OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES/ SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

Students in this category are:

- Students who are in receipt of an educational psychological report which states that resource teaching is required for the particular student due to the identification of a mild/general learning difficulty etc.
- Students identified as having a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia.
- Students identified by teachers within the school as having difficulties during their mainstream classes. This may be due to a number of factors such as poor attendance, illness, problems with the transfer from primary school etc.

### **(3) CATEGORIES:**

To date, the school has provided support for many of the following categories of students with learning difficulties/special education needs:

- Learning Support (i.e. remedial) students – the majority
- Borderline Mild General Learning Disability
- Mild General Learning Disability
- Emotional/Behavioural Difficulties e.g. AD/HD: Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.
- Specific Learning Difficulty/Disability e.g. students with dyslexia, dyspraxia.
- Physical/Sensory Impairment
- Asperger Syndrome
- Exceptionally Able/Talented
- Students whose learning difficulties are clearly linked to socio-economic disadvantage.
- ESOL students (i.e. English for students of other languages)

### **(4) OBJECTIVES OF THE LEARNING SUPPORT POLICY**

- To promote a whole school approach of inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs.
- To improve the general level of literacy and numeracy for each student with learning needs/ special educational needs.
- To prepare, and identify those who may need reasonable accommodation in state exams.
- To support the students who participate in the J.C.S.P programme.

- To support students who are participating in the L.C.A and, targeted students on School Completion Programme – subject to resource constraints.
- The support holistic development of the student with regard to their personal, social and emotional development in line with our school's mission statement.
- To promote the inclusion and integration of all students with special educational needs in mainstream classes.

#### *(5) IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS.*

The processes by which students with learning needs/ special educational needs are identified are as follows:

- The Learning Support department liaises with the H. S.C.L. officer/S.C.P personnel in reference to incoming students who may need assistance and who are travelling over with an educational report.
- Students who attended a support class may automatically receive assistance in our school.
- Students who are in receipt of an educational psychological report which recommends learning support will automatically receive help.
- Students are required to sit an entrance assessment to identify those students who have learning needs. These may not have received help in primary school. Such students may be forwarded for an educational assessment by an educational psychologist along with some students whose reports are out of date.

All teachers should be aware of the literacy/ numeracy levels/Special Learning difficulties of all students in their classes. This is especially important with regard to the placement of students with special needs in mixed ability classes.

The Learning Support department or Home School Community Liaison person will meet with relevant parties (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Year Head, Tutors, Primary Schools, class Teachers, Principal and Deputy Principal) before each school year to ensure the identification of students with special educational needs.

#### *(6) SUPPORT FOR S.E.N. STUDENTS:*

Students who have been identified with special educational needs can be supported within the class by an S.N.A, a learning support teacher or a teacher who team teaches with another colleague.

However, sometimes a student may find that this support is not sufficient to meet their needs. On such occasions, students are withdrawn from a class and given extra support. The written permission from a parent/guardian is sought before any support is undertaken.

Team Teaching can be organised in subject areas or with Learning Support department. These students are grouped according to ability and compatibility. Every effort is made to withdraw these students at a time that minimises disruption to learning. If withdrawal cannot be organised at the time of the specific subject, i.e. maths withdrawal at a maths class, withdrawal will be rotated over academic terms to ensure that no one subject is missed on a regular basis.

Regular information and feed-back is to be given to teachers, students and parents with regard to any progress being made. Times of withdrawal are usually posted on the staffroom notice board for teacher information.

#### *(7) EVALUATION.*

All students entering St. Dominics Secondary School work towards state exams the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied or the traditional Leaving Certificate.

Teacher observation, class tests and in-house examinations are important regular forms of evaluation of all students. However, students with special educational needs may also be required to undergo other tests which may be able to target specific areas of strengths and weaknesses.

Some examples of tests undertaken are:

- The Neale analysis of Reading Ability
- The Norman France maths ability test.
- The Rosenberg Self-esteem questionnaire.
- The N.R.I.T (Non reading intelligence test)

These tests are repeated in spring to evaluate any progress made and to identify students who may be experiencing difficulty in certain areas. It is hoped to introduce multiple intelligence (M.I) testing for Senior Cycle 2006.

Before the students come to school, they sit an entrance assessment (AH2, NFER Nelson group reading test and maths tests).

#### *(8) PRESENT SITUATION WITH REGARD TO LEARNING SUPPORT*

At present, the 1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> year students are placed in mixed ability classes and those students identified as having special educational needs are offered learning support either by team teaching/withdrawal. Some students are supported within the class either by special needs assistants, learning support teachers or teachers who team-teach with colleagues. There is, at present, a learning support class in third year. It is hoped to phase out this class in favour of mixed ability in order to promote equality of educational opportunity.

With regard to the senior cycle, provision for students with special educational needs is limited due to allocation of resources from the D.E.S.

The L.S team is committed to the development of I.E.P s for students with special educational needs. This is based on the agreement that resources are available (mainly: time) and are made available to the team to develop such plans.

The Department also acknowledges the role of special needs assistants in our school and welcome their involvement. It is hoped to develop a policy document in which roles are defined which will lead to a more effective interaction between our S.N.A's and teachers/ students in general.

#### **(9) Wheelchair Access**

It is school policy to make the school buildings, general classrooms and specialist classrooms more accessible to people with physical disabilities and to take measures when necessary, to ensure that these students have real access to the full curriculum.

## St. Dominic's Secondary School, Ballyfermot.

### Enrolment and Admissions Policy

#### **A. General information – General Introduction**

In introducing its enrolment/admissions policy, the Board of Management of St. Dominic's is setting out its policy in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, trusting that by so doing parents will be assisted in relation to enrolment matters. The Chairperson of the Board of Management, Sr. Eilis Ní Mhanagain OP, and the Principal, Ms. Mary Daly, St. Dominic's Secondary School, Ballyfermot will be happy to clarify any further matters arising from this policy.

#### **General Information:**

- The school's name, address and contact details:  
St. Dominic's Secondary School, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10. Phone: 6266493
- The school's denominational character and the name of the Patron:  
St. Dominic's is a Catholic school; the Dominican Sisters are its Patron
- The total number of teachers in the school is:  
including support teachers for students with special needs and Home/School Liaison teacher.
- Students are prepared for J.C.S.P., Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied and Traditional Leaving Certificate examinations, Transition Year is available for all students.
- St. Dominic's is an all girls Post Primary School.
- St. Dominic's depends on the grants and teacher resources provided by the Department of Education and Science and it operates within the regulations laid down from time to time by the Department. All school policy has regard to the resources and funding available.
- St. Dominic's follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the Department of Education and Science, which may be amended from time to time in accordance with section 9 and 30 of the Education Act (1998).
- Within the context and parameters of Department regulations and programs, the rights of the Patron as set out in the Education Act, and the funding and resources available, the school supports the principals of:
  - inclusiveness, particularly with reference to the enrolment of students with special needs
  - equality of access and participation in the school
  - parental choice in relation to enrolment
  - respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, language and way of life in society.

Students are expected to attend every class pertaining to their timetable unless excused by a letter from parents/guardians.

## **Decisions**

Decisions in relation to applications for enrolment are made by the Board of Management as specified in the Education and Welfare Act 2000.

As a general principal and insofar as is practicable, students will be enrolled on application. In the event that applications for enrolment exceed or are expected to exceed the number of places available the following criteria for enrolment may be applied:

Sister(s) of the proposed new entrant already in St. Dominic's  
Ethos considerations  
Parish boundaries  
Daughters of staff members – teaching and ancillary  
Lottery.

## **Enrolment of Students with Special Needs:**

In relation to applications for the enrolment of students with Special Needs, the Board of Management will request a copy of the student's medical and/or psychological report or where such a report is not available, will request that the student be assessed immediately. The purpose of the assessment report is to assist the school in establishing the educational needs of the student relative to her special needs and to profile the support services required.

Following receipt of the report, the Board will assess how the school can meet the needs to the student as specified in the report. Where the Board deems that further resources are required, it will, prior to enrolment, request the DES to provide the resources required to meet the needs of the student outlined in the psychological or medical report. These resources may include for example, access to or the provision of any or a combination of the following: visiting teacher service, resource teachers for special needs, special needs assistant, specialised equipment or furniture, transport service or other.

The Board or its representatives will meet with the parents of the student to discuss the student's needs and the school's suitability or capability in meeting those needs. If necessary, a full case conference involving all parties will be held which may include parents, the Principal, the Primary School teacher, learning support teacher, special class teacher, resource teacher, Home/School Liaison teacher or psychologist as appropriate.

It may be necessary for the Board to decide to defer enrolment of a particular student, pending:  
The receipt of an assessment report and/or  
The provision of appropriate resources by the DES to meet the needs specified in the psychological and/or medical report.

## **Pupils Transferring**

Pupils may transfer to St. Dominic's from other Post-Primary schools subject to school policy, available space and in some cases the approval of the DES. In line with the Education Welfare Act 2000, information concerning school attendance and the student's educational progress will be required to be communicated between the schools.

## **Code of Behaviour**

The Code of Behaviour for St. Dominic's will be appended to the Application Form for Enrolment and must be signed by the parents / guardians prior to enrolment.

# **St. Dominic's Secondary School, Ballyfermot.**

## **Code of Behaviour**

In St. Dominic's, we promote the social, personal, academic, spiritual and physical development of all our students.

The School Journal is the main means of communication between students, teachers and parents. The Journal must be available at all times for use by teachers. Otherwise students will be given a Daily Report Sheet and school work.

- All notes from parents must be written in Journal and should be signed by parents/guardians on a weekly basis.
- All written and oral homework must be recorded in this Journal everyday.
- Replacement Journal may only be obtained from Year Head, at a cost of €10.
- School begins at **8.50 a.m.** every morning and **1.10 p.m.** every afternoon. Students who arrive late for class will be given school work to compensate for loss of class time.
- Students must not leave school without permission from Tutor, Year Head/Deputy Principal or Principal. Permission to leave school must be accompanied by a note and a contact telephone number to confirm authenticity. Those found leaving without permission will receive extra school work.
- Respect must be shown to all Teachers / Staff and Students in class and on the corridors and school grounds.
- Abusive language / Defiance – Suspension
- The possession, use or supply of drugs legal and illegal in the school, on school related activities or on school trips is totally forbidden.
- Smoking is forbidden under the Smoke Free Workplace Policy. The use of cigarettes, lighters, aerosol cans and matches is also forbidden.
- Bullying shall not be tolerated and will be dealt with most severely under our School Policy.
- Permission to use toilet at designated break times only.
- Only small stud earrings are permitted. All facial piercings are not permitted. All other jewellery will be confiscated until the end of term.
- Consumption of Food/Drink is not permitted in the classroom.
- St. Dominic's is a Litter Free zone and all students are expected to co-operate fully in the classroom rota system.
- Mobile phones strictly forbidden – If found in the possession of one, it will be confiscated and returned to a parent/guardian after 2 days and on any subsequent occasions will be returned after 1 week to a parent/guardian.
- Defacing school property/stealing may warrant severe reprimand/legal proceedings.
- Full School Uniform is to be worn at all times, after 3 occasions out of uniform a warning letter will be sent home. Subsequent non wearing of uniform will result in a second letter being sent home arranging a meeting with parents. P.E. Gear must be worn for such classes.
- Runners are totally forbidden.
- Students participating in the book lending scheme are responsible for taking reasonable care of their books and returning them at the end of the year.

## **Suspension**

Suspension is a serious sanction and will be imposed by the Principal in cases where all efforts to resolve a disciplinary situation in the Ladder of Referral have failed or where the nature of the incident dictates that a student be removed from the school. The school will require a student to give an undertaking (*oral and written*) that she will behave appropriately if permitted to return to the school from suspension. Parents are fully informed of their right to appeal to the Board of Management against the suspension. All suspension will be reported to the Board of Management.

In accordance with section 21 Education Welfare Act 2000, where a student is suspended for six days or more, the Principal must report by notice in writing to an educational welfare officer.

## **Expulsion**

Expulsion is the most severe sanction imposed by a school. It will only be imposed for serious breaches of school discipline (*gross misconduct*) or for a consistent and progressive failure to abide by the school Code of Behaviour and values. In accordance with the Deed of Trust the Principal may for a cause, which he/she judges adequate, recommend the expulsion of a student to the Board of Management. The case against the student will be put to the student in the presence of her parents/guardians and they will be given an opportunity to respond. The parents will be informed of the complaint. Parents will be provided with a fair opportunity to challenge the evidence. The parents are informed in writing of the decision, the reasons for it and the right to appeal to the Board of Management by a specified date.

Should it be deemed necessary to speak with you re: your daughter's progress/behaviour, we would appreciate appointments being kept. Where appointments are not kept or not rescheduled, it should be noted that your daughter should stay at home until such a meeting takes place.

The school accepts no responsibility for loss of items confiscated or items stolen.

## **Parental Support is expected and appreciated.**

**I agree that while my/our daughter is a student of St. Dominic's to abide by the Code of Behaviour.**

**Student's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Tutor/Year Head Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Ladder of Referral

<b>Type of Violation</b>	<b>Action By:</b>	<b>Disciplinary Measures</b>
<u><b>Minor Misdemeanour</b></u>  No Books No homework Talking Late to class Chewing gum (etc.)	Subject teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written contact</li> <li>• Phone contact</li> <li>• Meeting with parent/Year Head may attend)</li> <li>• Tutor to be informed to act in a pastoral role.</li> </ul>
<u><b>Serious Breach of Discipline</b></u>  Defiance	Year Head	Meets the student and teacher and decides on punishment  Year Head options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet parent</li> <li>• Report Card</li> <li>• Proposed Suspension</li> </ul>
Failure to complete 2 Report Cards satisfactorily.          Recurrence of above	Deputy Principal          Discipline Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report Card/</li> <li>• Proposed Suspension</li> </ul>          <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet child and parent</li> <li>• Proposed Suspension</li> <li>• Discipline Report on return to school.</li> </ul>          Further violation will result in the issue being referred to the Board.
<u><b>Major Breach of Discipline</b></u>  Vandalism Stealing Bullying/Drugs	Principal/Deputy Principal   Refer to procedures in policy.	Suspension / fine



## **B. Application Procedures**

Application for enrolment as a first year student in St. Dominic's must be made by parent / guardian on the specified date each year. Applications from parents/guardians wishing to transfer their daughters from other Post-Primary schools may be made to the Principal.

### **Provision of Key Information by Parents/Guardians:**

The following information will be required for all students being enrolled in St. Dominic's:

- ✓ Pupil's name and address
- ✓ Pupil's date of birth
- ✓ Name and addresses of pupil's parents/guardians
- ✓ Contact telephone numbers
- ✓ Contact telephone numbers in case of emergency
- ✓ Details of any medical conditions which the school should be aware of.
- ✓ Religion
- ✓ Previous schools attended if any, and reasons for transfer if applicable
- ✓ Other relevant information e.g. special learning needs.

## **Staff Support Training**

Ongoing training has been provided for all staff throughout the years. In 2004/05, when mixed ability was introduced for the first time, special subject templates were provided for all 1<sup>st</sup> year staff, to document their class plans and challenges/solutions that they encountered.

Time is also given every month to allow each subject areas meet, to evaluate and to share best practice.

PowerPoint training has also been provided, a new multi-media room has been developed and it is hoped to continue to support staff in the use of technology in teaching and learning.

We have been involved in the Lap Top Initiative since 2001 and it is hoped to expand and develop this assistive technology to address the needs of students with specific learning difficulties.

The Lap Tops will be available for use in the Resource Rooms and the remainder will be networked in a specific area, to promote greater use by staff and students.

All staff have been consulted to ascertain the specific support/training that they require. The following areas have been identified:

- Inservice in Dyslexia
- Peer Mentoring in subject areas
- Differentiated teaching
- Team teaching

All staff attended a Workshop on “Accommodating Special Education Needs in Mainstream classes”

Further workshops concentrating on:

- Team Teaching
- Differentiated Teaching in Specific Subject areas
- Dyslexia and other related teaching/learning approaches will be provided on a ongoing basis.

## **Special Needs Assistants**

At present, the school has two SNA's. The SNA's are an additional support for specific students with learning difficulties. While the responsibilities of the SNA's are primarily with their designated student, often it is more beneficial if they assist in a general way in the classroom.

This can minimise disruption and promote integration of the designated student.

The SNA negotiates with the classroom teacher as to how best to deal with issues such as learning, discipline and misbehaviour. It is therefore important that there is good communication between classroom teachers and SNA's.

## **Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations**

The Learning Support/Resource Department together with the Exam Secretary and Principal apply for reasonable accommodation in state examinations for a number of students with learning difficulties each year. The most commonly used forms are:

- A waiver in spelling and grammar
- Assistance of a reader
- Use of tape-recorder

Parents and students should note that the fact that the student availed of an “accommodation” is indicated on his/her results’ certificate.

NEPS Psychologist (i.e. National Educational Psychological Service)

The Learning Support/Resource Department is in regular contact with the NEPS’ Psychologist whose support is almost exclusively aimed at students with special needs. The Psychologist supports these students:

- When the school applies for additional resources for them
- When the school applies for Reasonable Accommodations in state examinations
- By offering advice to students and to their parents as well as to teachers.
- By counselling students
- By carrying out Psychological Assessments free of charge.

Parents may choose to have their child privately assessed.

The Psychologist serves a number of schools in the general area and visits our school about eight times a year.

## **Grievance Procedure**

Parents/Students who are concerned and who wish to discuss or make suggestions about any aspect of educational provision should approach the relevant teacher, tutor, year head or learning support/resource co-ordinator. If necessary, an issue can be dealt with by the Principal, Deputy Principal or Board of Management.

## **Parents: Communication and Participation**

Communication between teachers and parents has traditionally been good in the school and parents continue to play a positive and mainly supportive role in the education provided to all students. One of the objectives of the Education for Persons with Disabilities Act is *“to ensure that parents have a central role in all important decisions concerning the education of their children”*. This is already the case for many parents in the school and this policy encourages all parents to play a more central role and to do so more often, e.g. where additional support is provided to students. This policy encourages teachers to inform and involve parents more when additional educational support is being provided.

## **Students**

The general body of students responds positively to the education normally provided in the school and student with special needs are particularly appreciative of the additional support provided. Students tend to play the role of recipient of both normal provision and of additional support and this policy encourages them to play a more active role – which is generally more practicable in a support context than in a normal class.

## **Individualized Planning**

The Education for Persons with Disabilities Act 2004 outlines the steps to be taken in the preparation of individual education plans (section 3 & 7) and will provide guidelines and “the necessary monies and support services” required “In accordance with Section 12”