

# **Pobalscoil Chiarán/St. Ciarán's Community School**

## **Special Education Needs Department Policy**

### **Mission Statement**

Our school supports and encourages the academic, spiritual, moral and physical development of all students. We strive to create and maintain a strong work ethic and an ethos of co-operation and mutual respect in a caring and inclusive environment.

The principle aim of Learning Support is to provide a positive learning environment, which will foster the academic, social and emotional development of students with SEN and to enable each to realise their individual potential.

### **Admissions Policy**

See Appendix A

## **SEN POLICY**

This policy applies to all students with SEN, including students with exceptional ability, who attend St. Ciarán's Community School. It is also intended to serve the school community including the B.O.M, the Principal, the teaching & ancillary staff and parents.

Once identified, a student will be supported in his/her learning to the greatest extent possible within the resources available to the school.

### **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

St. Ciaran's Community School sets out to provide education for all its students, with reference to legislation regarding students with SEN as listed below:

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Education Welfare Act (2000)
- The Equal Status Act (2000)
- The Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill (2003)
- The Equality Act (2004)
- The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)
- The Freedom of Education Acts (1997 and 2003)
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)

This policy is drafted in the context of:

- DES Circular Letters
- The guidelines published by the NCSE
- The guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process 2006
- The Guidelines on the Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools (NEPS).
- The guidelines published by the Special Educational Needs Support Service (SESS)

### **Aim of the Policy:**

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 St. Ciarán's Community School aims to:

- Provide, 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 all students in the school.
- Ensure that students with special educational needs are educated in an inclusive environment, as far as possible.
- Affirm that students with special educational needs have the same right to avail of, and benefit from education as students who do not have those needs.
- Provide for the involvement of parents in the education of their children.
- Ensure that all members of staff have access to information on the special educational needs of students.
- Set high standards for students with special educational needs and provide them with appropriate guidance, encouraging them to achieve to their full potential.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at home and at school.
- Co-operate and work closely with the appropriate agencies with regard to the education of students with special educational needs.
- Co-ordinate the advice, guidance and support of these agencies in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Ensure the effective and efficient use of resources.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of practice in support of students with special educational needs. Outcomes in student engagement, attainment, attendance, social development,

happiness, independence and progress, as appropriate will be measured subject to resources.

## **Rationale**

This policy document, which is regarded as a reflection of current practice, outlines the form that additional support for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) takes in the school and the philosophy which underpins our actions and decisions. The school bases its rationale on the three major principles laid out in the EPSEN Act:

1. The education of people with SEN shall take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs.
2. People with SEN shall have the same right to avail of and benefit from appropriate education, as do their peers.
3. People with SEN, like their peers, should leave school with the skills necessary to participate, to the level of their capacity, in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives.

## **Principles which Guide the Process**

1. Resources are provided to support students with special educational needs ensuring the continued development of St. Ciaran's Community School as a truly inclusive school.
2. Supports provided to students with special educational needs are based on identified needs. Regular reviews of progress (in consultation with parents and students) as outlined in the Continuum of Support Guidelines will take place where the resources available allow.
3. The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in the classroom, including students with special educational needs.
4. Students with the greatest levels of need should have access to the greatest level of support where resources allow. Whenever possible, these students will be supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.

## **PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH EMERGING NEEDS**

For students with emerging needs, including the exceptionally able, the concern may have been identified through the whole school screening and monitoring systems, informal observation or parental concern. The year head may ask teachers to complete a referral form for students who they have a concern about that focuses on the student's behaviour, academic performance, homework etc. Some students will need further individual or diagnostic testing to identify the nature of their needs (both learning and behavioural). They will be referred to the appropriate agencies for assessment.

### **Categories of Special Educational Needs**

To date, the school has provided for the following categories of students with Special Educational Needs:

- Learning Support Students
- Borderline/ Mild General Learning Disability
- Emotional / Behavioural Difficulties—ADD/ADHD
- Specific Learning Difficulty—Dyslexia/Dyscalculia
- Physical disabilities—Dyspraxia,
- Mild Speech and Language Disorders
- Sensory Difficulties (hearing & visual impairments)
- EBD-Emotional Behavioural Difficulties
- ESOL students (English for speakers of other languages)
- Autism / Autistic Spectrum Disorder

### **Models of SEN provision**

In assessing and deciding which students need to be in receipt of support teaching and which students may benefit from support within the mainstream context the following options are considered:

- Curricular differentiation
- Team Teaching/Co-operative Teaching
- In-class support/Differentiation
- Inclusion of SNA in specific classes
- Small group withdrawal
- Individual withdrawal
- Organisation and Life Skills lessons
- Behaviour Support interventions

- Curricular reduction (reduced load) - This occurs only after all avenues have been exhausted. A consultation between the parents/guardian and guidance counsellor is also necessary. Parents must sign a consent form giving permission for a reduced subject load.

The period of intervention recommended for each student is dependent on the nature and extent of their individual need. The duration of provision is varied and is reviewed throughout the intervention. There are cases where support is needed on a short-term basis, after which the student is in a position to re-engage with the regular curriculum.

### **Access to Learning Support**

Supports provided to students with special educational needs are based on identified needs and are informed by regular reviews of progress (in consultation with parents and students) as outlined in the Continuum of Support Guidelines.

The following categories of students may qualify for learning support in the school;

- Students who have a psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support/Resource teaching. Parents/guardians have, are encouraged, on enrolment, to make known to the school authorities details of any previously diagnosed disability, or special educational need and to make available previous school reports, results of state examinations and/or previous assessment tests. Consultation with individual parents/guardians who express concern is an important way to gather information to assist in the identification process. Opportunities for this arise at the annual Open Night, at Parent/Teacher Meetings and by appointment with parents.
- Students who display significant difficulty in accessing aspects of or all of the curriculum
- Students who are identified by parents/teachers or who themselves request support may be accommodated within existing grouping where appropriate. Staff referrals are an important means of identification. The professional judgement of staff members working on a daily basis with students is an essential method of identification (**see Appendix C**)
- Students identified following their initial school assessment. First Year students are required to take initial assessments for the purpose of profiling. Psychometric tests are compulsory for all students. Tests are as recommended by the Department of

Education and Skills and are not disclosed under the guidelines for ethical testing. These group tests may be supplemented by literacy, spelling and numeracy assessments for all students with an educational psychological report or other professional report following entry into the school in the first term.

- Students who are identified following consultation with NEPS and appropriate support agencies. Relevant information may be available from other sources that will assist the school in the identifying learning needs and making appropriate provision, subject to resources.

## **PROVISION FOR STUDENTS WITH KNOWN AND DOCUMENTED NEEDS**

### **Transfer from Primary School**

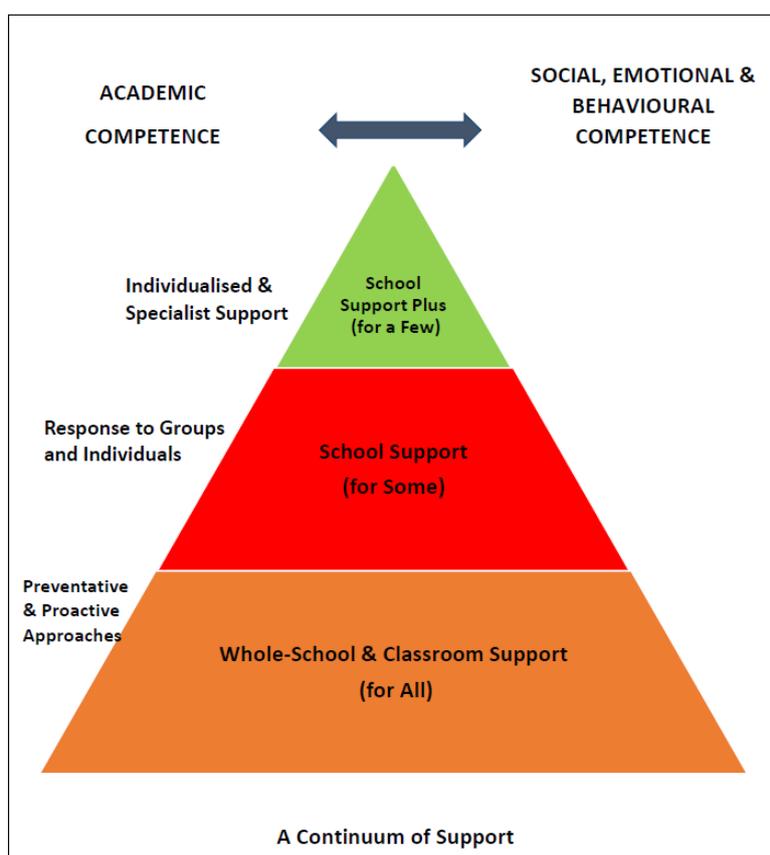
- The transfer of information from primary level to post-primary level is vital to the successful support of students with SEN.
- At the Open Night prospective parents have the opportunity to meet and discuss the transition for their child with members of the SEN team.
- A member of the SEN team will visit or contact the feeder Primary Schools to collect up-to-date information.
- We liaise with the primary school and parents of students with very specific needs who would benefit from more than one visit to the school.
- A meeting with the parent/ guardian of students with SEN may also be arranged. Establish communication with the primary school resource/ learning support teacher.
- We apply for SNA support/Assistive Technology for relevant students.
- All incoming first year students take a Cognitive Ability Test; CAT 4. These tests can also be used to identify strengths and needs of incoming students with SEN. This data is used to help identify students who may need additional support, including exceptionally able students.
- The SEN team will create Personal Pupil Plans for students who require such intervention.
- Reviews of supports for students on the SEN Register occur at regular intervals.
- Students transferring into other Year Groups. When a student is accepted into a year group other than First Year, information is sought from their previous school (Educational Psychological report, School reports, attendance, etc.). This is the responsibility of the

Principal/ Deputy Principal. Any relevant information is then passed to the Year Head and the SEN team. **(See Appendix B)**

## Continuum of Support

The model of assessment and intervention, as practised in St. Ciarán's Community School, is underpinned by recognition that special educational needs occur along a continuum, from mild to severe and from transient to long term. Our response to the needs of students is organised according to NEPS's Continuum of Support.

Information collected from the parents, primary schools and school testing is collated and used to create a profile of students with SEN on entry to St. Ciaran's Community School. Student assessments are studied and those who score in the bottom 15th percentile have their progress monitored and where required supports are implemented subject to the availability of resources. If there is little/no progress by Second Year more targeted interventions are put in place where resources allow.



## **Personal Pupil Plans and Individual Education Plans**

A Personal Pupil Plan is devised for students with significant Special Educational Needs. Students with more complex needs will have a more detailed IEP within the Continuum of Support framework.

The I.E.P process involves:

- Gathering Information: Personal/ Background details
- Educational details (primary school details/assessment and learning support details)
- Categorisation of need (assessment reports/ information attained from parents)
- General profile based on formal/informal assessment
- Priority Needs identified
- Setting targets for each priority learning need
- Identifying the strategies and resources required
- Setting the date for review

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS IN THE SEN TEAM**

The SEN team comprises the Principal, Deputy Principal, the Learning Support and Resource teachers, the Guidance Counsellor and the mainstream teachers. The team also includes any SNA, as approved by the DES. The team is advised by the SENO and NEPS psychologist as well as other agencies and professionals involved with SEN students in the school.

### **The Role of the SEN Department**

The role of the SEN Department includes:

- Timetabling and review of students receiving learning support
- Liaising with the Special Educational Needs Officer (SENO)
- Liaising with the psychologist and other agencies
- Screening of incoming 1st years
- Monitoring academic progress of students
- Applying for relevant grants
- Application for reasonable accommodations at Junior Cert and Leaving Cycle level

- Liaising with parents, teachers, the pastoral care team, tutors, year heads and other appropriate personnel as necessary.

### **Key Members of the SEN team**

- The Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Learning Support Teachers in various subject areas
- Guidance Counsellor
- Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

“The Principal teacher has overall responsibility for the school’s learning-support programme and for the operation of services for children with special educational needs”. (Learning-Support Guidelines, P.38).

### **The Principal Teacher should:**

- Assume overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the school’s policies on learning-support and special needs.
- Support the Learning-Support Teacher in liaising with other professionals, when appropriate, regarding pupils with special needs.
- Monitor the implementation of the school policy on learning-support on a regular basis.
- Oversee the implementation of a whole-school assessment and screening programme to identify pupils with very low achievement and learning difficulties so that these pupils can be provided with the support they need.
- Encourage teachers to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of learning support, in particular class teachers who may have little knowledge of the disabilities that these students have or the difficulties they may have in trying to follow the curriculum.
- Ensure that adequate classroom accommodation and teaching resources are provided for the learning-support teacher.
- Ensure that a secure facility for the storage of records relating to students in receipt of learning support is provided.
- Monitor the selection of pupils who are selected for learning-support and ensuring that the students are receiving adequate support teaching.

- Liaise with external agencies such as psychological services to arrange assessments and special provision for students with special needs.
- Maintain a list of students who are receiving learning-support.
- Liaise regularly with the learning-support teacher.
- Meet with parents of pupils receiving learning-support when required.
- Ensure that procedures exist for consultation with feeder primary schools with regard to the enrolment of new students with SEN.
- Ensure that mainstream teachers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the education of students with SEN.
- Facilitate the creation within mainstream classes of an inclusive environment for students with SEN by making available appropriate information to mainstream teachers.
- Facilitate the continuous professional development of all members of staff in relation to the education of students with SEN.
- Ensure parents are invited to share information regarding their child's special educational needs, and are consulted about how this information should be used in the best interests of their child. Ensure parents are involved in the preparation, implementation, progress and review of their child's education.
- Ensure parents are fully aware of the school's procedures governing access to their child's records.

**The Board of Management's role is:**

- To ensure that the policy is developed supported and evaluated.
- To consider reports from the Principal on the implementation of the policy and to consider any recommendations.
- To ensure adequate accommodation and teaching resources.
- 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.
- To develop a whole school approach to literacy and numeracy under Section 14 of EPSEN.
- To promote inclusion by ensuring that an awareness of SEN is instilled in all of the school community

**The Learning Support Team's role is:**

- The primary role is to support and assist the inclusion of students with special educational needs.

- To establish structures and procedures for the implementation of the policy.
- To ensure that Reasonable Accommodation is sought for SEN students sitting State Examinations.
- To inform staff of individual students' needs.
- To plan a Learning Support timetable
- To monitor and evaluate individual students/groups of students with SEN.
- Providing diagnostic and informal assessments for students.
- Collaborating with subject teachers by giving advice on teaching methodologies best suited to a student.
- Sharing the Student Support Plan/Personal Pupil Plan with teachers to ensure that differentiated teaching is focussed and targeted.
- Providing direct teaching to a student with SEN either to reinforce the teaching that takes place in the classroom or to improve upon the core skills that may be necessary to successfully access the second level curriculum.
- To provide team teaching/ cooperative teaching when appropriate.
- Contributing at meetings involving parents and/or outside agencies when appropriate.
- Collecting and analysing school-wide screening data, including intake screening, transfer information, attendance and behavioural records. Gathering information from subject teachers/ other staff.
- Planning, implementing and reviewing individual and/or group interventions.
- Seeking external professional advice, as needed.
- To advise SNAs around the care needs of relevant students.

### **Role of the Guidance Counsellor:**

- To work with the other members of the SEN team in facilitating the provision of education for students with SEN and their inclusion in the school.
- Counselling in personal, educational and career development.
- Co-ordinating the CAT4 prior to/on entry.
- Providing career information.
- Consulting with parents and staff.
- Consulting with community organisations.
- Providing vocational preparation – job search skills, preparation for work experience.
- Working closely with Year Heads and the SEN team to identify students requiring support.

- Facilitating individual appointments for students to support them in making career decisions.
- Advising students and parents on subject choice and subject load.
- To liaise with students and parents in relation to DARE applications.

**Special Needs Assistant:** The role of the SNA is pivotal in the care of students with SEN and is recognised by the whole school community as being of enormous value. The duties of the SNA are outlined by the DES are as follows:

1. Preparation and tidying up of classroom(s) in which the pupil(s) with special needs is/are being taught.
2. Special assistance as necessary for pupils with particular difficulties e.g. helping physically disabled pupils with typing or writing.
3. Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene.
4. Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks and similar activities.
5. To assist students at break-times.
6. Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods.
7. Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom.
8. General assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the Principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature.
9. Assist and motivate the student to stay on task and to re-focus where necessary
10. To help organise the student in terms of homework journal, books and materials for class.
11. Where a Special Needs Assistant has been appointed to assist a school in catering for a specific pupil, duties should be modified to support the particular needs of that child.
12. In practical classes the SNA will assist the student in following the safety rules.
13. Participate in reasonable accommodations for in-house exams for student.
14. To accompany the student where necessary during breaks from class
15. The SNA has a unique insight into the difficulties experienced by the student(s). This information is shared with mainstream teachers, the SEN team and the management of the school to assist in future planning for these students.

### **The Role of the Pastoral Care Team for each year is:**

- To monitor the effects of the policy and help to identify students requiring support.
- To refer to outside professionals and agencies as needed.
- To counsel in personal, educational and career development.
- To consult with parents and teachers.

### **Role of the Year Head**

- To support the creation of an inclusive climate within the school and contribute significantly to the work of the special educational needs support team.
- To facilitate the inclusion of an individual student with special educational needs by monitoring the student's progress within the year group.
- To encourage an awareness of special educational needs in the student body, including a respect for students with SEN.

### **The Subject Teacher's role is:**

- To create a classroom environment that accommodates and takes cognisance of learning difficulties. To differentiate his/ her teaching practice.
- To assist in the identification of students in need of Learning Support. If a concern arises about a student not previously identified the class teacher will share this concern with a member of the SEN team.
- To bring any concerns to the SEN department.

### **Differentiation**

With regard to teaching students with low achievement/ability, the following approach may be implemented:

Differentiated instruction is a means by which teachers can create an inclusive and supported learning environment for all students. It acknowledges that students learn at different rates and in different ways. The following general approaches are recommended:

- Setting learning objectives for students with SEN at an appropriate level.
- Modify presentation, questioning techniques, style of questioning etc. in order to maximise the involvement of students with SEN

- Allow alternative formats for answering questions i.e. orally, typing etc.
- Set up 'buddy' learning systems in the class to involve more able students working with those with SEN either in collaborative groups or in peer-tutoring arrangements

### **Reasonable Accommodations for State and In House Examinations (RACE)**

Applications are made for students with SEN sitting a Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate Examination. The following are the range of accommodations available to the students which are applied for as per circular criteria. Accommodations are granted by The State Examinations Commission. From October 2016 the State Exams Commission SEC will operate a devolved model at both Junior and Leaving Cert Level. The school will make application for relevant accommodations for students who meet the criteria as laid down by the SEC at Junior Cycle and these accommodations can be reactivated for Leaving Cert, with the school being satisfied that the student still has a need for the accommodation. Further details are available in the RACE Guide for Exam Students on the school website and at [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie). Where resources permit and where deemed appropriate, readers, scribes and other accommodations are available to students who qualify for such accommodations at mock exams and other school assessments.

### **Exemptions from Irish**

- Incoming first years with Irish exemptions are noted.
- Certificates of exemption from the study of Irish must be submitted with the enrolment application. The school will only consider granting an exemption for Irish when a written request is made by the student's parents and supported by an Educational Psychologist's report or other relevant documentation.
- The guidelines set down by the Department of Education and Science will be strictly adhered to (Circular M10/94). ([http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/ppc10\\_94.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/ppc10_94.pdf)). Where possible, withdrawal for Learning Support/ Resource is arranged for students with SENs, during non-exam class periods. This is not guaranteed and is limited by timetable restrictions and staff availability.
- Applications for Irish exemptions: a student will only be considered for an exemption where their educational circumstances come within the provisions of the relevant post primary circular.

- ([https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/ppc10\\_94.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/ppc10_94.pdf)).

### **Parents are expected and encouraged:**

- To contact the school to discuss their child's special needs so that the school can commence planning appropriate accommodation and support services.
- To be proactive and supportive of the school in implementing this policy.
- To use their unique knowledge of their child to further their learning plan.
- To meet with teachers, learning support team or pastoral team where appropriate.
- To provide support for homework and learning.
- To provide information in the form of assessments and Primary school reports.

### **Students are encouraged:**

- To engage positively with their learning plan, both at the planning and review stage.
- To participate in their learning in a group, individual or class setting in a positive manner.
- To develop ownership of the skills and strategies taught in a Learning Support setting.

### **Storage of Information**

Taking into account confidentiality - profiles, reports and house exam results are stored in a locked cabinet in room 13. This is the base room of the SEN department. After the student has left the school the files are moved to the school archive where they are stored for 7 years. Any member of the teaching staff may have access to this information if the need arises.

Relevant educational information will be provided in a password protected file on the staff network accessible to all members of the teaching staff. This is to facilitate lesson planning, incorporate differentiation within lessons and ensure inclusion of all students in order that they may achieve their highest potential.

## **Bullying**

In accordance with our school anti-bullying policy and cognisant of the vulnerability of some students with educational needs as well as the concerns of parents around this issue the SEN department provides support and social skills training, subject to resources.

## **Planning**

Planning is a prerequisite for all effective teaching and is especially so for students with special educational needs.

- The SEN department is timetabled for a weekly meeting to plan and discuss relevant issues.
- All learning support teachers have an individual timetable which is structured around the needs of our students.
- Teachers involved in learning support are required to furnish timetables to the Deputy Principal by the end of October each year. Timetables are subject to change throughout the school year depending on needs and resources.
- Individual Education Plans (I.E.P.s) will be prepared for students, subject to resources, post entry.

## **Professional Development**

All members of the teaching staff will be encouraged to avail of in-service training/CPD as it arises.

## **Participation in School**

The academic success of our students with Special Educational Needs is a priority in Pobalscoil Chiaráin / St. Ciarán's Community School. We strive to ensure that every student is prepared fully to play a full and confident role in their future life. Students with special education needs are actively encouraged to take a full part in extra-curricular activities. Inclusion in school activities is seen as a key element in fostering self-esteem and personal growth.

## **Priority Areas for Development**

- A file to be created where all transition information and test scores can be inputted and accessed when creating Personal Pupil Plans
- A central data base of SEN teaching to be created
- Team Teaching to be further embedded in the school culture

# Appendices

## Appendix C

Special Education Needs (SEN) Staff Referral Form

Dear Colleague,

If you wish to inform the SEN Department of academic concerns you may have regarding any of your students please complete below and return to the school SEN team.

Thank you,

Cara McLoughlin

PRINCIPAL.

Student Class Subject Concern

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Private, Confidential and without Prejudice

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Teachers are available to give support in the numeracy and literacy areas to students. We are of the opinion that \_\_\_\_\_ would benefit from numeracy and/or literacy support during this academic year (subject to review).

If you have any questions or would like to speak to me at any time regarding this matter, do not hesitate to contact me or make an appointment to see me.

Yours sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_,'

Cara McLoughlin

PRINCIPAL

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Please complete and return. Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_ give permission for \_\_\_\_\_ to receive support as above.

I \_\_\_\_\_ do not give permission for \_\_\_\_\_ to receive support as above.

## **Glossary**

SEN: Special Education Needs

SENO: Special Education Needs Organiser (external to school)

SENC: Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (internal)

IEP: Individual Education Plan

SNA: Special Needs Assistant

RACE: Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Examinations

NEPS: National Educational Psychological Service

CAT: Cognitive Ability Test

SEC: State Examinations Commission