

Integration and Inclusion of Special Needs Children into Mainstream Classes Policy

Introduction:

The need for a policy on inclusion developed from the collective desire of the teaching staff to have a defined and uniform whole school approach to the issue of integration. The policy was devised following consultation with all stake holders including mainstream and support teachers, as well as the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS). The school strives to include all children in curricular learning experiences.

Rationale:

The policy was formulated so that

- teaching staff had clear well defined guidelines on best practice
- there was consistency throughout the school
- optimum learning experiences were provided for all the children

Aims:

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

Staff Roles:

Principal:

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

Special Class Teachers:

The Special Class teachers will

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

Class Teachers:

The mainstream class teachers will

- adjust programmes to meet the needs of the Special Class pupil
- provide a suitable seating arrangement in the mainstream setting
- collaborate with the Special Class teacher and the S.N.A

Implementation:

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

For integration/inclusion to be effective it must

- further develop social skills
- not interfere with the level of learning within each class
- be done in conjunction with and have the goodwill of the class teacher

The process must be open to review at all times. The school insists that a maximum of 2 children per class be integrated at any given time. Early levels of integration into mainstream are on a social level only. The Special Needs child will not partake in general class learning until they have mastered the art of -

- entering the class without trepidation
- sitting down at a designated desk
- interacting on a social level with child(ren) nearest them
- having lunch with the whole class
- engaging in a "buddy" system at playtime
- re-acting to general teacher instructions within the classroom setting

Curricular Integration:

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

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

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

Reverse integration:

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

- Special Needs children being integrated for core curriculum subjects such as Maths and English do so through the reverse integration route initially. This involves withdrawing 3-4 children from mainstream to work with the Special Needs child in his/her own environment. Hopefully this will lead to conventional integration into mainstream in the long term
- children from mainstream Junior/Middle classes engage in life skills integration with the Special Needs children on a weekly basis
- children from the Senior Classes provide reverse integration by accompanying the Special Needs children on weekly swimming sessions
- a timetabled "Buddy System" involving the Special Classes and children from 4th / 5th and 6th classes is operational for all playtimes, throughout the school year.

Staff Development:

Opportunities for in service and staff development in relation to the implementation of a workable system of integration will be provided once a year by a suitably qualified practitioner.

Assessment:

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

1. social integration
2. language and communication
3. play and behaviour

Home - School Liaison:

Each child takes home a class diary detailing the level of integration the child has engaged in each day. The parents can then progress this aspect of their child's learning through additional hours of one to one learning which is available through HomeTuition.

I.C.T:

All children will have access to a computer, both in mainstream and in the Special class.

Review:

This policy will be reviewed in 2016 as more information on techniques to ensure effective integration becomes available.

Policy Approval/Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Cullina National School

Date: 27/01/2015

Signed: *Griffith J Griffiths*

Chairperson Board of Management

Date: 27/01/2015

Signed: *Máire Bn Uí Chroínín*

Principal Cullina National School