

Additional Educational Needs Policy

Pobalscoil Neasáin



Ratified by the Board of Management Pobalscoil Neasáin

13/12/2021

Pobalscoil Neasáin: Additional Educational Needs Policy



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Section 1: Introduction: Ethos, Vision and Values of Pobalscoil Neasáin

Introduction:

Pobalscoil Neasáin is a recognised co-educational, multi-denominational school post-primary school under the joint patronage of (i) The Irish Sisters of Charity (ii) The Irish Christian Brothers and (iii) The City of Dublin ETB (CDETB).

Ethos and Values:

The core values of Pobalscoil Neasáin are care, respect, inclusion, equality, justice and fairness. These values combine to provide and support an atmosphere which is conducive to excellence in teaching and learning.

Our values are reflected in how we live as a school community. The unique and intrinsic value of each member of the school community is recognised and respected. All are treated equally, regardless of race, gender, religion,/belief, age, family status, marital status, civil status, membership of the Traveller community, sexual orientation, ability, disability or socio-economic status.

Our school, Pobalscoil Neasáin, provides a safe physical and social environment that reinforces a sense of belonging to the school community and wider society. We strive to enable every student to realise their full potential regardless of any aspect of their identity, culture or background. Our school promotes a fully inclusive education which recognises the plurality of identities, beliefs and values held by students, parents and staff. We prepare open-minded and responsible citizens with a strong sense of shared values with a view to contributing to a just and fairer society.

Vision:

- We endeavour to assist each student to reach his/her full potential in a calm, caring and creative environment.
- Once enrolled, our school Pobalscoil Neasáin provides all our students with equal opportunities to engage with the curriculum, school life and the local community.
- All our policies are underpinned by the values we have chosen to represent our characteristic spirit "Meas, Díograis agus Dea-Chroí".
- Our school promotes a fully inclusive education which recognises the plurality of identities, beliefs and values held by students, parents and staff.

Section 2: Aims of our AEN Policy and AEN department in PSN

Aims of the AEN department

- To facilitate the social, emotional and educational (including literacy and numeracy) and physical wellbeing of students with special educational needs
- To ensure that PSN is an inclusive learning environment that enables students with additional educational needs to live a full life and to realise his or her full potential as a unique individual through access to an appropriate broad and balanced curriculum
- To enable students with additional educational needs to function as independently as possible in society through the provision of such educational supports as are necessary to realise that potential
- To help students with additional educational needs develop the skills they need to continue learning in adult life
- To ensure that parents/guardians are involved in decisions about their children's education.

This policy is a reflection of our current practice in PSN in relation to facilitating and promoting a whole school approach to additional educational needs.

Aims of this policy

This plan aims to outline our procedures and practices of how we:

- Identify additional educational needs that our students have
- Allocate resources to effectively meet the needs of our students with additional needs
- Divide the roles and responsibilities among our school community in relation to students with additional needs
- Track, monitor, review and report on the progress of students with additional needs
- Communicate information between AEN team, SMT, staff and parents/guardians

Section 3: Categories of Additional Educational Needs

Additional Needs are defined in the *Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004* as, “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...”. As per our school admission policy, Pobalscoil Neasáin welcomes students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN) and endeavours to “provide that the education of people with such needs shall wherever possible take place in an inclusive environment” (ibid, 2004).

The various categories of additional educational needs, the definitions of these categories, and the criteria for the allocation of additional resources and the procedures for application are set by the Department of Education (DE) and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and are as follows:

- Physical disability
- Hearing impairment
- Visual impairment
- Emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems
- Severe emotional disturbance and/or behaviour problems
- Mild general learning disability
- Borderline general learning disability
- Specific learning disability
- Moderate general learning disability

Students who have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of the students in their class group

- Students with temporary emotional trauma
- Students who fall behind from the general level of progress of the class because of other reasons (i.e. illness)
- Students whose first language is not English

Students who are particularly gifted and need additional stimulus

- Autism/autistic spectrum disorder
- Students with special educational needs arising from an assessed syndrome
- Specific speech and language disorder
- Multiple disabilities

The policy applies to all students with SEN, including students with exceptional ability, who attend Pobalscoil Neasáin. It is also intended to inform best practice and policy across the school community including B.O.M, the Principal, the teaching and ancillary staff and parents.

Section 4: Roles and Responsibilities of Additional Education Needs Partners

The AEN partners comprises of the Principal, Deputy Principals, the AEN Coordinator and the Guidance Counsellors, AEN teachers, Mainstream teachers, ISAs, parents (HERE). The AEN Coordinator is also part of the Pastoral Care Team in the school and works closely with Year Heads and mainstream teachers when the need arises. The team is advised by the Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) and NEPS psychologist as well as other agencies and professionals involved with students with SEN in the school.

The Role of Board of Management is to:

- Ensure the development, implementation, and review of this policy.
- Ensure that a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum is provided so that students learn the skills necessary to participate in society.
- Ensure that necessary resources are sought on behalf of students with AEN.
- Promote inclusion by ensuring that an awareness of AEN is instilled in all the school community.

The Role of Senior Management Team is to:

- Inform the Board of Management of issues with AEN.
- Appoint a AEN Coordinator and work closely with the Co-ordinator.
- Consult with the AEN Coordinator and other personnel who liaise with the Department of Education and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) regarding needs and provisions.
- Ensure the effective and efficient use of resources, including the allocation of resource hours and funds.
- Access available resources and promote a whole school approach to additional educational needs, make all staff aware of their responsibilities in this area and to facilitate appropriate staff development in this area.
- Promote the development of positive partnerships with parents of AEN students.
- Process applications for Irish exemptions.
- Provide leadership in developing relevant whole school policies: enrolment/assessment, inclusion/integration
- Manage the implementation of policies and practises
- Provide strategic support for evidence-based interventions.
- Assign roles and responsibilities
- Direct the work of the Inclusion Support Assistants

The Role of AEN Coordinator (AENCO) is to:

- Oversee the day-to-day operation of the AEN Department.
- Coordinate provision for students with AEN
- Lead policy development and promote best practice
- Create and maintain a school register of students with AEN.
- Assist in the identification of students with AEN

- Ensure that Student Support Plans (SSP's)/ Personal Pupil Plans (PPP's)/ Individual education plans (IEPs)/ One-page IEPs / Assistive Technology Plans & Behavioural Plans are in place for students with AEN
- Advise teachers of the recommendations made in professional assessments relating to individual students.
- Support collaboration between mainstream teachers and resource teachers through team teaching.
- Assist the Principal in the allocation of resources.
- Administer, correct and oversee standardised assessments and ensure that applications are made for Reasonable Accommodations for Certificate Examinations at State Examinations (RACE)
- Provide RACE in-house exams where possible given the resources available.
- Liaise with outside professionals
- Liaise and communicate with parents to plan and review interventions.
- Ensure that systems are in place for the referral of students by teachers, parents etc.
- Facilitate a weekly meeting of the AEN team.
- Participate in the Pastoral Care Team meetings.
- Liaise with primary schools to aid the transition from primary school
- Support, advise and collaborate with ISAs around the care needs of relevant students.
- Collect and analyse data to create class profiles
- Identify appropriate CPD for Special Education Teachers (SET)
- Develop and review the practice of the AEN team

These duties are reviewed regularly and may change to ensure the priority needs of the department are met.

The Year Heads' role is to:

- Support the creation of an inclusive climate within the school and contribute significantly to the work of the AEN team.
- Facilitate the inclusion of any individual student with additional educational needs by monitoring the student's progress within the year group.
- Encourage an awareness of students' additional educational needs including maintaining a respect for students with AEN.

The Additional Education Needs Teachers (AENT)'s role is to:

- Provide direct teaching to a student with AEN 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.
- Provide team teaching when withdrawal from the classroom may not be the most appropriate means of supporting the student.
- Provide diagnostic and informal assessments for students at regular intervals to monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention.
- Collaborate with subject teachers by giving advice on teaching methodologies best suited to the student.

- Collect and interpret school-wide screening data, including 1st year screening assessment, transfer information, attendance and behavioural records. Gathering information from subject teachers / other staff.
- Plan, implement and review individual and/or group interventions
- Advise ISAs around the care needs of relevant students.
- Report on progress of their allocated student on term reports.

The Guidance Counsellors' role is to:

- Consult with community organisations
- Provide vocational preparation – job search skills, preparation for work experience
- Work closely with Year Heads and the AEN team to identify students requiring support.
- Facilitate individual appointments for students in Third year, TY and Leaving Cert. year to support them in making career decisions.
- Advise students and parents on subject choice and subject load.
- Assist with the administration of testing e.g. CAT4, WRAT4, WIAT etc.
- Administer the Differential Aptitude Test's to Transition Year students.
- Liaise with students, parents and the AEN team in relation to DARE / HEAR applications and to process them.

The Chaplain's role is to:

- Support the students through collaboration with the AEN department, Guidance Counsellor and school management.

The Inclusion Support Assistants (ISAs) role is to:

- Provide care assistance to named students with AEN.
- Be involved in the Personal Pupil Plan (PPP), devised by the Additional Needs Support team and give guidance on their role in the successful implementation of this plan.
- Recognise their role in the health and safety of the student and in their social, emotional and educational development, without developing a culture of dependency.
- Attend weekly ISA meetings and staff meeting when appropriate.
- Assist/escort students on school trips.
- Give special assistance as necessary for students with difficulties e.g. Helping student with AEN with typing, writing or other use of equipment.
- Assist with clothing, feeding, toileting and hygiene, administering medication
- Be mindful of the health and safety needs of the student
- Assist with RACE for in house examinations (when appropriate).
- Assist teachers in the supervision of students during assembly, recreation and in movement from classroom to another.
- Accompany individual or small groups who may be withdrawn temporarily from the class.
- Participate with school development planning, where appropriate, and cooperate with any such changes with policies and practises arising from the school development process.
- Engage with parents of students with AEN as required and directed by school management.
- Treat all matters relating to school business and their work, as strictly confidential.

- Provide and update a timetable during the school year and furnish the Principal and AEN Coordinator with a copy.

The role of the mainstream teacher is to:

- Be aware of the school policy and procedures for supporting students with AEN and ensure the needs of students are met.
- Differentiate teaching and learning methodologies for students, including exceptionally able/gifted students.
- Seek advice from the AEN Department regarding students with AEN.
- Plan for the effective use of an ISA for students in the class, this can be done in consultation with AEN Coordinator or SET.
- Direct the work of the ISAs in the classroom.
- Support / encourage independence in the student.
- Identify students who may be at risk (considering general progress or organisational, communicational, behavioural, emotional, or social needs)
- Complete referral forms or information forms as required by the AEN team.
- Create a positive environment for all students.
- Create opportunities for success.
- Establish behavioural and learning expectations.
- Assess/monitor progress.
- Inform parents of the progress of students through parent teacher meetings and school reports.
- Contribute to school development planning for their subject area whilst always having concern for students with AEN.

Parents/Guardians

Collaboration and sharing of relevant information between home and school are essential elements of our AEN plan. Parents/Guardians through their unique knowledge of their own children have much to contribute to their child's learning.

Parents/Guardian should:

- Share any information, reports or reports pending from health professionals, and/or concerns regarding their child's development. Copies of up-to-date professional reports should be provided to the school at the enrolment stage
- Support the work of the school and keep the class teacher informed of the progress and challenges they observe in their child's learning
- Attend parent-teacher meetings
- Inform the post-primary school of their child's needs, at the transition stage

Students

Students who are in receipt of support teaching should, as appropriate:

- Become familiar with the targets that have been set for them

- Develop 'ownership' of the skills and strategies that are taught and learn to apply these learning strategies and skills to improve their own learning
- Contribute to the evaluation of their progress by participating in appropriate assessment activities, including self-assessment

Section 5: Rationale and Context of Additional Education Needs Policy

Our AEN policy aims to outline our commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all our students. This commitment is underpinned by the ethos, aims, vision, values and culture of PSN and our patrons and guided by relevant legislation.

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Equal Status Act (2000)
- The Education (Welfare) Act (2000)
- The Equality Act (2004)
- The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998, 2003 and 2018)
- The Freedom of Information Acts (1997 and 2003)
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
- The Disability Act (2005)
- The Education Admission to Schools Act (2018)

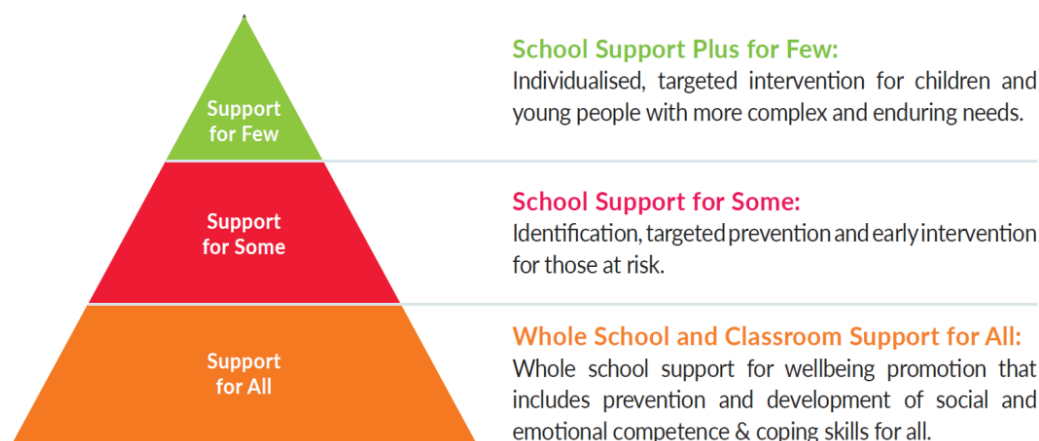
This policy is drafted in the context of:

- DES Circular letters and specifically the Special Education Circular 0014/2017
- The guidelines published by the NCSE
- The guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process 2006
- The guidelines on the Continuum of Support Post-Primary Schools (NEPS)
- The guidelines published by the Special Education Needs Support Service (SESS)
- Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools. Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools published by the DES

Section 6: Models of Provision and the Continuum of Support

Continuum of Support

The model of assessment and intervention, as practised by Pobalscoil Neasáin, is underpinned by recognition that additional education 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 NEP's Continuum of support.



Identification of Known, Documented and Emerging Needs

1. All 6th class students enrolling in Pobalscoil Neasáin are required to complete the Cognitive Abilities Test 4 (CAT4) in January of the academic year. This test identifies strengths and needs across four different batteries.
2. Students who achieve below the fifteenth percentile in any of these areas will be considered for learning support.
3. Once a place in the school has been accepted, parents are asked to complete a form indicating if their child has had educational / medical reports relevant to supporting them in school and/or if they previously attended AEN department.
4. Copies of IEPS/ Student support files from the primary are also requested from the parent by the AEN team for those students identified as having either an emergent need or a known one.
5. The parents of children with AEN, who attended an AET for additional support in primary school, are sent a form to provide the AEN team with background information on the child and their learning in September of 1st year.
6. The information on the child's educational passport (if received) from primary school is added to the data available on the child.
7. If a student transfers during the year into the school, information is sought from their previous school (Educational Psychologist report, School reports, attendance). This is the responsibility of the Year Head. Any relevant information is then passed on to the AEN Co-ordinator.
8. Class profiles are created on all first-year classes using scores from formal testing in primary school, the CAT4 results and results from literacy assessments that is administered to all first-year class in early September. These profiles can be used to identify students who may need support.
9. In addition to this the SEN Coordinator will also:

- a. visit or contact the feeder Primary Schools to collect up to date information.
- b. liaise with primary school and parents of students with very specific needs who would benefit from more than one visit to the school.
- c. Meet with the parent/ guardian of students with AEN if necessary.
- d. Establish communication with the primary school AET.
- e. Apply for ISA support/ Assistive Technology/ Transport Assistance for relevant students.

For students with emerging needs, including the exceptionally able, the concerns may have been identified through the whole school screening and monitoring systems (CAT4), in class assessment, informal observation, parental concern.

A referral form is available to teachers who have concerns about a student's academic performance or behaviour. Alternatively, teachers can complete this when meeting with the AEN Coordinator.

Some students will need further diagnostic testing to identify the nature of their needs.

Where possible, parents are contacted and consent is sought before tests are administered.

The Differential Aptitude Test (DATs) are completed by all students in TY to help decide what is the best senior cycle course to engage, what subjects are of strengths and help with areas of need.

Models of AEN Provision

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

- Curricular differentiation
- Curricular reduction – for students with an AEN who have challenges coping with the breadth of the current curriculum, a reduction in the number of subjects taken is considered. This occurs after all avenues have been exhausted and there is consultation with parent/guardian, Year Head and the guidance counsellor if necessary. School developed short courses are also a way of bridging gaps in students learning.
- Team Teaching/ Co teaching
- In class support
- Inclusion of ISA in specific classes
- Small group withdrawal
- Individual withdrawal
- Level 2 Learning programmes (L2LP), a programme that is designed for students who are unable to access Level 3 Junior Cycle Curriculum
- Resource enriched class – depending on the make-up of a year group and the level of need in it a smaller resource enriched class may be created in a Junior Cycle Year group, so students can access all the same subjects but have greater access to supports in this class. Selection for this level of support is based on scores from formal testing (primary schools scores and PSN psychological testing), professional reports, information from the primary school and parents.

The period of intervention for each student is dependent on the nature and extent of their individual need.

Section 7: Allocation of Support to Students

Once pupils' needs have been identified, additional educational needs teachers are deployed to address these needs as required. We deploy AEN teachers in a variety of ways in order to effectively meet pupils' needs. We aim to strike a balance between in-class support, group and individual support while ensuring that the needs of students with additional needs are met inclusively.

Importantly, the level and type of support reflect the specific targets of individual students as set out in their support plans and are informed by careful monitoring and review of progress. In this way, following a period of intervention, some students may no longer require additional teaching supports; some may require the same level, while others may require more intensive supports.

In planning the allocation of additional teaching supports, the over-riding principle is that resources are deployed to address the identified needs of pupils. Importantly, those with **the highest level of need should have access to the greatest level of support**. We consider methodologies best suited to promoting meaningful inclusion such as differentiation, heterogeneous grouping, team-teaching and small group teaching.

In addition to literacy and numeracy difficulties, many pupils will have specific needs in such areas as oral language, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development, motor skills and application to learning.

A Student Support File or Individual Education Plan is devised for students with AEN who attend an AET for additional support.

All 1st Year students with an AEN who attend an AENT for additional support will have a SSP. These will correlate to the guidelines for Post-Primary Schools, Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream schools.

Student Support Plans / Individual Education Plan contain the following information

- Personal/ background details
- Educational details, assessment and formal testing results
- Categorisation of the need based on assessment reports
- A general profile based on formal/informal assessment
- The AEN provision for the student
- Priority needs are highlighted
- Targets are set for the student's priority learning needs by the AENT in consultation with the student
- Strategies to enhance learning are included and the resources required
- The date for review

Reasonable Accommodations for State and In-House Examinations (RACE)

Applications are made for RACE provision for students with AEN sitting a Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate examination. The school makes applications 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 2020 at www.examinations.ie

Where resources permit and when deemed appropriate, readers, scribes and other accommodations are available to students who qualify for such accommodation at mock exams and other school assessments

Exemption 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.
- Great effort is made to arrange withdrawal for additional support for students with AEN, who do not study Irish, during the Irish time. This is not guaranteed as it may be limited by staff availability and timetabling restrictions and completed in accordance with the guidelines for Post Primary Schools, Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools.
- New applications for Irish exemptions are made in writing to the school Principal.
- The guidelines set down by the Department of Education and Skills will be strictly adhered to (Circular 0052/2019).

Section 8: Communication

AEN Team

- The AEN Coordinator and AEN team meet formally once a week. Informal meetings occur on a daily basis.
- Members of the AEN team can meet mainstream teachers formally or informally.
- The AEN Team aims to communicate with each other as much as possible through school email, Microsoft Teams, and WhatsApp.
- At the end of each year AEN make recommendations on the students IEP/ SSP to use as a reference, should a change of AENT happen.

Mainstream teachers

- At the beginning of each school year, the AEN Coordinator updates a register of information focusing on the incoming First Year students with AEN. This information is shared on VSWare and all teachers are made aware of its existence at the start of year staff meeting and encouraged to consult it regularly.
- All First-Year students with a diagnosis from an outside professional, have a one page IEP (this comprises of an explanation of the diagnosis, strengths and learning needs identified by reports, parents and primary school, suggested strategies made by the AEN team) on their VSWare personal file, under the SEN section. Teachers are made aware of these.
- Information is also communicated via the Year Head and student support structures such as the Care Team.

Communication with parents:

- The school journal is used for straight-forward communications with parents (reminders to bring in materials, notice of incomplete work, record of lateness etc.)
- Parent-teacher meetings are held once a year for face-to-face communication and the AEN team are available to meet with the parents of the students who engage with them.
- Students receive a written school report twice in the school year (at Christmas and summer) and their progress within the AEN department is included.
- Regular communication is available through direct email to the AEN Coordinator and meetings on request.
- Where there is more than one AEN teacher working with a student, a designated AEN teacher will be aligned to that student. This teacher will be responsible for filling out reports, communicating to parents and gathering targets from other teachers.
- Parents help the school by keeping the teachers informed of the progress / difficulties, they observe in their child's learning as they progress through post primary school. This should include showing an interest in the completion of homework and familiarising themselves with approaches taken in school.
- School open night
- Email to parents
- Include parents (where appropriate) in meetings involving external agencies
- Meetings with the AEN Coordinator and Principal/Deputy Principal/ Guidance Counsellor/Year Head where relevant

Record Keeping

A full record of psychological reports, out outside agency reports and records of meeting are kept in individual student's files in the AEN Coordinator's classroom/ office in a locked cabinet. All information is managed in accordance with the directives of both the freedom of Information Acts and Data Protection Acts. Student records are destroyed after five years.

Section 9: Priority Areas for Development Year 2021-2022

- Continued development of a central AEN base on Microsoft Teams to help store resources and allow for easier management of administration /paperwork
- Extension of the Vocabulary Enrichment Programme and the ALERT programme to more students in 2021/ 2022
- Ongoing professional development opportunities for staff in the area of special education. AsIAM online training for all mainstream teachers and SNAs. Training will also be made available to parents
- Create a bank of social stories and school visuals to help Autistic students with the transition into secondary school
- Transition Year mentoring programme with first year students with SEN
- Re-establish an exceptionally able programme
- Devise a programme for Autism awareness month in April
- Increase our commitment to student voice by ensuring all students who attend for additional support are involved in skills audits, discussions around their learning needs and have input into their learning targets.
- Maths testing for all first years
- Increase collaboration with mainstream teachers to develop further knowledge and understanding of students by asking First year teachers of maths and English to have students complete at least one competency test during class time in the month of September and present this information to the AEN team

Ratified by the Board of Management Pobalscoil Neasáin

13/12/2021