



## **St. Aloysius College Special Needs Policy**

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### **School Context**

Saint Aloysius College is an all-girls voluntary non-fee paying secondary school with current enrolment of 728 students. The College is under the Trusteeship of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God and the Le Chéile Trust. The school has an open and inclusive admissions policy that caters to students from a wide catchment area.

While the student body of the school is perpetually evolving, the mission of the school remains constant: to develop the uniqueness of the individual pupil in an atmosphere which is both academically challenging, yet sensitive to the pupil's particular needs. It is, therefore, the policy of St. Aloysius College that all students with special educational needs receive appropriate support to enable them to access an effective learning environment that is suited to their needs and abilities.

### **Rationale**

In accordance with the Education Act of 1998 and the EPSEN Act 2004, St. Aloysius “provides education to students which is appropriate to the abilities and needs without prejudice...[and] uses its available resources to ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with a disability or other special educational needs. Furthermore, the aims of the policy are grounded in the following principles:

- All students are valued equally
- Students are encouraged to integrate academically and socially
- Obstacles to learning are reduced and multiple points of access to the curriculum are encouraged
- Suitable learning targets are set to meet the diverse learning needs of all pupils
- Curriculum is appropriately differentiated based on the needs of particular pupils
- Subject support is supplied when appropriate
- Development of self-esteem and self-advocacy skills are of paramount importance

### **Goals of the Special Educational Needs Team:**

- To identify and provide for all students with special educational needs appropriately and equitably
- To promote a whole school approach for including students with special needs in the school environment
- To ensure that screening of new students is effectively carried out and that all appropriate information in regard to student’s learning needs is available to the appropriate teachers
- To develop appropriate learning and social/emotional goals for individuals with special

needs.

- To collaborate with all relevant school personnel to ensure that students with special needs are appropriately supported
- To collaborate closely with teachers and to provide them with strategies to ensure that all students with special needs are appropriately supported in the classroom
- To ensure that teaching staff are provided with appropriate information in regard to students with special needs and that the information is regularly updated
- To inform staff of the services and resources available
- To ensure that student files are kept up to date and are stored in a confidential manner
- To provide for the Professional Development of teachers in regard to Special Needs

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The model of SEN provision is focused on the needs of the student. It is firmly based on the principles that support of students with special needs in the school is a whole school responsibility, and acknowledge and understand the roles everyone in the school play:

- The school's administration provides a structure and environment that supports the learning of all students and is particularly sensitive to the learning needs of students with special needs
- The Special Needs Coordinator oversees a small support team (including SNA's) that assists the subject teacher to meet the needs of students with special needs.
- SNAs collaborate with students and classroom teachers, and liaise with Special Needs Coordinator and school administration; they also keep a log of student progress.
- Resource teachers implement programmes/work on students' learning goal, provide subject support, and review progress of students with the SEN team.
- Classroom teachers are informed of students' particular needs and provide appropriate differentiation and access to curriculum.
- External agencies such as NEPS, Health Service Executive (HSE), SESS and other professionals are invited to work with the whole staff on a regular basis.

Parents and guardians are also essential participants in the education of their children. Fostering good relationships with parents is a priority and every opportunity is taken to involve them in decisions regarding their students. An "open door" policy for parents is encouraged, and parents are consulted regularly by phone or face-to-face meeting.

### **Provisions for Students with Special Needs**

Resource time is allocated to those students with psychological assessments as agreed by the SENO. Individual and/or small group resource classes offer subject support, study skills, and literacy-and numeracy- building activities, depending on the specific learning needs of the students. Some students have modified programmes and timetables appropriate to their individual needs. The school has a number of non-national students in need of language support. Extra classes are organised to facilitate the learning of these students.

Students with emotional disturbances or ASD symptoms are supported by the SNAs, Resource

teachers, and the school guidance counsellor. Students learn socialisation skills through school-provided resources: games, activities, and small group collaboration are designed for students with these particular needs. Students with depression and anxiety are provided with a safe space in the Resource and are coached to use coping mechanism recommended by health professionals.

In cases where Emotional Disturbance exhibits with anti-social behaviour that disrupts the learning environment, student behaviour plans are developed and implemented by the SEN team, student, parents, and classroom teachers.

### **Referral for Special Needs Services**

In the event that a student is perceived to have special educational needs, but have heretofore never been assessed, there is a procedure to recommend evaluation and assessment. Parents and classroom teachers may refer a student for evaluation. Teachers who express concern fill out a form that reports their observations of the student, and the reason for referral. The SEN coordinator contacts the parent of the student to discuss the particulars and ask if the parent wants to proceed with preliminary evaluation. No evaluation is administered without the express permission of the parents. Diagnostic assessments used by the school are the WRAT IV and ACCESS Reading and Mathematics tests. Based on the findings, a recommendation is made for the appropriate course of action. The school directs the parents to the appropriate outside agency, and makes every effort to assist the parent in contacting said agency.

### **Transition from Primary to Secondary School**

The school Guidance Counselor and Special Needs coordinator communicate with the primary schools in the catchments area every Spring. They oversee the confidential transfer of information (both oral and documented) to ensure a smooth transition from primary to secondary for the special needs students, including the transfer of all pertinent documentation. Parents of students with special needs are contacted and conferenced with individually.

### **Transition from Secondary School to Third Level/Vocation**

The special needs coordinator consults with students and parents who may be eligible to receive reasonable accommodations for Certificate Examinations. It is the responsibility of the special needs coordinator and deputy principal to fill out the appropriate sections of the application, while it is the responsibility of the parents and students to complete their sections. The school posts applications and appeals within the appropriate time frame, and informs students of the outcome in a timely manner.

Students who wish to pursue DARE are given guidance by the career counselor and special needs coordinator. The school will assist with applications, but ultimately the process must be completed by parents and students.

Students not wishing to pursue third level education are given appropriate advice, and meetings with parents are organized to discuss students' options for the future. All efforts are made to have a plan in place for the student leaving school.