



Educate
Together



SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) POLICY

ETSS WICKLOW

Crinion Park, Wicklow Town

INTRODUCTION

This Special Educational Needs (SEN) policy outlines the supports that ETSS Wicklow provides for its students with additional needs. The policy is in line with the school's ethos to provide every one of its students with an equal opportunity to achieve their potential.

RATIONALE OF SEN POLICY

Our SEN 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 and culture of ETSS Wicklow and our patrons and guided by the 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 and 2003)
- The Freedom of Information Acts (1997 and 2003)
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
- The Disability Act (2005)

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

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To facilitate the social, emotional and educational (including literacy and numeracy) and physical wellbeing of students with special educational needs.
- To ensure that ETSS Wicklow is an inclusive learning environment that enables students with special educational needs to live a full life and to realise their full potentials as unique individuals through access to an appropriate broad and balanced curriculum.
- To enable students with special 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 special 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.

CATEGORIES OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The various categories of special educational needs, the definitions of these categories, the criteria for the allocation of additional resources and the procedures for application are set by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) – up to date lists of these categories are available on the NCSE website <https://ncse.ie/>

ETSS WICKLOW ASD CLASS

ETSS Wicklow recognises that each student in the ASD class is unique with different strengths and difficulties. Staff in the ASD class spend time getting to know and understand the needs of each student by thoroughly researching the information available in each case, through observation of the students in their day to day life in the school and by exploring which strategies help students most and which should be avoided. Staff are dedicated to encouraging students in their interests and in helping them discover new interests.

ASD staff create an environment of consultation with students to help build the best possible atmosphere for learning – consulting on where they would like to sit, giving instructions in lists and breaking down projects to manageable tasks, allowing the necessary time to process information and concentrating always on creating conditions that set the students up for successful educational experiences.

Teaching methodologies are varied and include thoughtful approaches such as backing up verbal information with pictures and helping students to apply instructions to real life situations. Often one of the biggest difficulties for students with autism is understanding how to do homework. The staff in the ASD class help students organise their approach to homework and email parents with information about homework. They help students use *speech to text* technology in Word or other programmes so there is less writing and they communicate with subject teachers to help develop the most successful strategies for guiding students towards reaching their full potential.

Staff in the ASD class have high expectations of students, believing that students can thrive in secondary school. They may need adaptations, a different approach and a lot of kindness and understanding, but it is important to note that many students with autism go on to great achievements in further education and adult life and the job of ETSS Wicklow is to empower students as much as possible to help them reach their own full potentials in the future.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS TEAM

The overall responsibility for the provision of education to all students, including students with special educational needs, lies with the Board of Management, and the Principal of the school has the overall responsibility of ensuring that special educational needs of students are met to the best levels possible in relation to school resources.

In order to facilitate the organisation and provision of education for students with special educational needs in ETSS Wicklow, we have identified both the internal and external SEN team members below.

ETSS WICKLOW INTERNAL SEN TEAM

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- SEN Core Team
- Special Education Teachers in ASD class
- Mainstream Teachers with SET hours
- Mainstream Teachers
- Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

ETSS WICKLOW EXTERNAL SEN TEAM

- Board of Management
- Parents
- External Agencies
- External Support Services
- Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO)

THE SEN CORE TEAM

ETSS Wicklow established the SEN Core Team in 2019 to provide an organisational structure for SEN which facilitates collaboration among staff members in an efficient and effective manner for the benefit of the students with special educational needs.

At present, all members of staff support students with special educational needs.

The Roles and Responsibilities of the SEN Team are Outlined Below:

The SEN Core Team in conjunction with the Principal and Deputy Principal:

- Oversees the day to day operation of our school's SEN policy, including formulation, implementation and review
- Liaises with feeder schools, teachers & parents of incoming students
- prepares a plan for provision of SEN classes within the school

- Supports management with the coordination and timetabling of the SEN team (learning support teachers/SNAs)
- Supports management with the coordination and allocation of duties for SNAs
- Liaises with and advises colleagues in relation to SEN
- Co-ordinates the formulation, implementation and review of Student Support Plans (Appendix A)
- Monitors and tracks students with SEN
- Co-ordinates provision for students with SEN e.g. withdrawal of students for individual/group instruction, in class support etc.
- Oversees the records/reports/register on students with SEN
- Liaises with parents/guardians of students with SEN
- Contributes to the in-service/upskilling of staff as appropriate
- Facilitates the identification of Irish and 3rd language exemptions
- Co-ordinates the application for ***Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations (RACE)***
- Liaises with external agencies and support services as appropriate including the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the State Examinations Commission (SEC) and National Education Psychological Service (NEPS).

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

COMMUNICATION

All communication is conducted in a respectful, timely and confidential manner and follows best practice guidelines in relation to data protection and school policies.

(a) SEN Team

The SEN team meet on a regular basis in order to ensure best practice in relation to the supports being provided to our students. These meetings can be formal or informal. In formal meetings, minutes are taken. There are also meetings with senior school management, meetings with external agencies, staff meetings, in-service training and staff training. Teachers will also have regular meetings with learning support teachers regarding students' in class support.

(b) SEN Register

At the beginning of each academic year, a SEN Student Register is compiled and circulated to all teachers and to the SEN team. This register includes details in relation to a student's name, class and year, category of SEN, amount of support allocated, type of supports provided. The SEN Core Team may select a small sub-committee to complete the SEN register tasks.

(c) Record Keeping

All SEN records and individual SEN student files are kept in secure files in the Principal's office. Best practice guidelines in relation to data protection are followed.

(d) Student Support Plans (SSPs – see Appendix A)

An SSP will be prepared for each student who has additional needs in line with best practice. These SSPs will be regularly updated as per agreed protocols at ETSS Wicklow.

(e) Parents & Guardians

Communication to parents is facilitated through many channels – starting with events such as our open day and information evenings, also through letters/emails/phone calls/VSWare texts to parents, student journals, parent-teacher meetings, meetings with SEN team and staff consultation hours.

(f) External Agencies

Communications and meetings with external agencies e.g. NCSE are organised and attended as appropriate.

SEN MODEL OF ORGANISATION IN ETSS WICKLOW

Identification Process

We encourage parents to meet with us to discuss their child's specific needs and our school's capacity to meet the child's needs. We request that all relevant documentation and information be forwarded to us. Where diagnosis/reports are deemed inadequate or out of date, the Principal/Board of Management may insist that the parents/guardians obtain an up to date Educational Psychological Report. In general, the NCSE do not rely on reports which are older than 4 years.

Management Support

Management will ensure that the school can plan its support for all incoming students by either visiting schools in its catchment area or facilitating meetings of incoming students and their parents. We facilitate the transition from primary school for students with additional educational needs through a visit to ETSS Wicklow before the start of the new academic year. As part of our transition programme and first year induction, we ensure that students with SEN are included and supported in their initial experiences in our school. In addition, all students take the CAT4 exam which provides further information about students' needs and informs planning.

Assessment – Monitoring, Tracking

All students listed on our ETSS Wicklow SEN register have an SSP (*see Appendix A*) which facilitates the tracking and monitoring of specific targets and progress, including specific interventions, levels of support, assessments and referrals.

Timetabling

The SEN timetable is scheduled after the mainstream timetable has been organised and issued to teachers at the start of the new school year. This is reviewed towards the end of each term.

Access to the Curriculum

All students are provided with the opportunity to access the mainstream Junior Cycle curriculum and student needs are supported with advice in relation to optional subjects. Where appropriate, L2LP can be facilitated to ensure that students are both challenged and rewarded at an appropriate level. Students exempt from the study of Irish attend ‘Applied Irish’, a practical immersion into Irish culture which can have learning support and EAL objectives included in the overall programme.

Team Teaching and One-on-One Teaching

Resource permitting, ETSS Wicklow may use a team-teaching model to support its students with additional needs. It will also use a small group and/or one-on-one model to support its students with additional needs.

Access to Rooms for Students with Additional Needs

All school facilities and resources are available to our SEN students. The SEN timetable will include details about room allocation.

Examinations (In-House Assessment, SEC Exams, etc)

An extra examination centre is provided for SEN students during our in-house exams if it is deemed necessary. Applications will be made to the ***State Examinations Commission*** (SEC) for ***Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations (RACE)*** provision for students with SEN sitting the Junior Cycle or Leaving Certificate when deemed necessary.

SUCCESS CRITERIA FOR SUPERVISION POLICY

- Ensuring that every student is given an equal opportunity to achieve their potential.
- Providing well organised plans that are kept up to date and regularly reviewed and evaluated.
- Constant monitoring of students with additional needs to ensure that they are supported to the greatest extent possible.

.....

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed once a year and adjusted as required in the light of any circulars or new legislation dealing with SEN in schools or development in school policy.

APPENDIX A - STUDENT SUPPORT PLANS – GUIDELINES

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) creates a statutory requirement to have education plans for individual students with special educational needs.

Six steps are identified in the NCSE Guidelines in relation to drawing up, implementing and reviewing an SSP, as provided for in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004).

These steps are:

- **Step 1** Gathering information
- **Step 2** Statement of level of performance including strengths, needs and impact on learning
- **Step 3** Identification of priority learning needs and time frame for targets
- **Step 4** Setting targets for each priority learning need
- **Step 5** Identification of the strategies and resources required
- **Step 6** Setting date for review of SSP

The purpose of an SSP is

- to guide the provision of services,
- to encourage effective teaching and learning
- to promote access to a full curriculum.

Section 9 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) stipulates that the matters to be specified in an education plan for an individual student should include:

- the nature and degree of the child's abilities, skills, and talents;
- the nature and degree of the child's special educational needs and how those needs affect their educational development;
- the present level of educational performance of the child;
- the special educational needs of the child;
- the special education and related support services to be provided to enable the child to benefit from education and to participate in the life of the school;
- where appropriate, the special education and related services to be provided to enable the child to effectively make the transition from preschool education to primary school education;
- where appropriate, the special education and related services to be provided to enable the child to effectively make the transition from primary school education to post-primary school education;
- the goals the child is to achieve over a period not exceeding twelve months.

In formulating priority learning needs, the SEN team considers:

- The child's current level of performance.
- The child's specific strengths and needs.
- The child's rate of progress.
- The urgency of the child's needs in specific areas of learning.
- The relevance of the learning needs prioritised.
- The child's motivation and interest.

SUGGESTED SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR WRITING AN SSP:

Have we:	Yes / No
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• listed the personnel involved in the development of the SSP?• included personal details about the child such as name and address?• included a comprehensive profile of the child based on the wide-ranging information gathered?• identified the child's strengths, abilities and talents?• identified the range of learning needs?• selected the child's priority learning needs• selected targets consistent with the priority learning needs?• identified appropriate teaching strategies to achieve the targets?• identified suitable materials / resources to achieve the targets?• included a date for review of the SSP?• where appropriate, identified personnel who will work with the child to help him/her achieve targets?	

The following general guidelines are suggested for planning by mainstream and resource teachers and, as appropriate, other specialist teachers:

- Planning for teaching should be linked to the targets in the students' SSPs.
- When teaching plans are being drawn up, due regard should be paid to the setting (for example classroom, laboratory, or resource room) and the framework (for example individual work, small group, or class group) in which the teaching and learning will take place.
- Short-term objectives for teaching and learning should be stated in clear, unambiguous language.
- Short-term teaching plans should be based on these objectives, showing the content to be covered, the teaching methods to be used, and the resources that are needed.
- An individual record should be kept of each student's progress towards the goals in his/her SSP.
- Short-term learning objectives and the teaching strategies should be kept under review, particularly in the light of the student's engagement with the learning activities and their progress towards the goals in their SSPs.