



# **Special Educational Needs (SEN) Policy**

## **1. Context**

St. Vincent de Paul Girls' School caters for children from 2<sup>nd</sup> Class to 6<sup>th</sup> Class and is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The school currently has a Principal, 13 mainstream class teachers and 3 Special Education teacher posts.

The school has 3 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). The allocation of both Special Education teachers and Special Needs Assistants is subject to Department of Education guidelines.

The purpose of this policy document is to provide information to school personnel and parents on how we organise provision for teaching and support of children with special educational needs.

The term special educational needs is broad and includes children who have difficulty acquiring literacy and/or numeracy skills, children with difficulties with fine or gross motor skills, children with social and emotional difficulties, children who have English as an additional language (if that impacts on their progress) and children who have diagnosed disabilities. In this document, SEN can be taken to be special educational needs in this broad sense.

A whole school approach is used in teaching and learning in relation to pupils with special educational needs.

Our SET team encompasses what were previously termed Learning Support Teachers, Resource Teachers and teachers for children with English as an Additional Language (EAL teachers). In this document we will use the term Support teachers for all of the SET teachers.

The policy is based on Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (Department of Education & Skills).

## **2. Aims of SEN Support**

Our school is committed to helping our pupils to achieve their full potential. The provision of a quality system of SEN support teaching is integral to this commitment. This policy is in accordance with the child safeguarding statement and risk assessment.

Through the implementation of our SEN policy we aim to:

- support the inclusion of children with SEN in our school
- develop positive attitudes about school and learning in our children
- ensure that the staged approach, the Continuum of Support is implemented (see appendix 1)
- optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable children with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school (Guidelines for Schools, p15)
- enable children to participate in the full curriculum



- support appropriate differentiation in the classroom, including provision for exceptionally able students
- support children's development both socially and emotionally
- enable children to understand themselves as learners
- promote collaboration among the special education team, class teachers and special needs assistants in the implementation of whole-school policies on learning support for our pupils
- promote early intervention programmes designed to enhance learning and prevent/reduce difficulties in learning.
- involve parents in supporting their children. \*\*Parents are requested to share any report from an external agency, for example Speech and Language report, Psychological report, as per school enrolment form. These reports can inform differentiated teaching approaches where applicable and will be considered under the Continuum of Support.

### 3. Principles of SEN Support

- The provision of SEN support in our school is based on the following principles:
- Identify and support the needs of SEN pupils in a timely and appropriate manner.
- Direction of resources towards children in greatest need.
- Match the level of support with the level of need.
- Implementation of a staged approach to support provision at Class Support/School Support/School Support Plus levels via the Continuum of Support model
- Provision of the model(s) of intervention appropriate for the child, including the withdrawal model, in-class support model, individual or group work, etc.
- Effective whole-school policies.
- Parental involvement involving parents/guardians in supporting their children

#### **Continuum of Support – Staged Approach**

##### *Stage 1. Classroom Support*

If a class teacher or parent has concerns about the academic, physical, social or emotional development of a child, the class teacher will then construct a simple, individual plan of support to be implemented in the normal class setting. This plan will form the 1st instructional page of the child's Continuum of Support and will be based on screening measures administered by the teacher. The plan will be reviewed after each instructional term (using the Review Page from the Continuum of Support document). If the plan is working well for the child it may be decided to continue with it. If insufficient progress is made and the child is still having difficulty then Stage 2 (School Support) is implemented.

Exceptionally able/gifted children: Interventions will be made by the Class Teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) of the Continuum of Support. These interventions will be recorded on the Classroom Support Plan.



### *Stage 2. School Support*

If further intervention is deemed necessary (after further diagnostic testing by the Support teacher) and the child is to receive supplementary teaching at School Support Level then a letter of consent will be sent to the parents by the Learning Support teacher in question. Template of letter to be kept on shared folders. The class teacher and Support teacher then draw up a plan of appropriate learning outcomes for the child. This plan will form the 2nd instructional page of the child's Continuum of Support and will be implemented in conjunction with the child's Classroom Support Plan (1st Page). The child's parents/guardians will be informed of this plan, invited to contribute and asked to sign it. This plan will be reviewed at the end of each instructional term and if significant concerns remain after a number of reviews, it may be necessary to involve outside agencies such as NEPS or the HSE. (Stage 3)

### *Stage 3. School Support Plus*

The school may formally request, in collaboration with parents, a consultation from other professionals outside the school in respect of children who fail to make sufficient progress after supplementary teaching or the implementation of a behavioural programme, as appropriate. Such professional advice is sought from psychologists, speech therapists, audiologists, occupational therapists etc. This is carried out in consultation with and with the permission of the child's parents/guardians. Following the consultation, the class teacher, Learning Support teacher, parents and outside profession (if available) will draw up a Learning Programme for the child. This plan will form the 3rd instructional page of the child's Continuum of Support. In case of children identified at an early age as having significant special educational needs, intervention at Stage 3 will be necessary on their entry to school. Support in the classroom will be an essential component of any learning programme devised for such children and primary responsibility for the child will remain with the class teacher in consultation with the designated Support teacher.

Note: The 'Log of Actions' in the Continuum of Support will be added to as appropriate (after a decision has been made or a meeting held). These additions will be made by the Class Teacher or the Support teacher.

## **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

The role of supporting learning is a collaborative responsibility shared by all the school community: The Board of Management, Principal Teacher, Parents, Class Teachers, Learning Support teachers, SNAs, Children and external bodies and agencies.

### **Board of Management**

The Board of Management will:

- be informed of the reviewed SEN policy and any updates to it.
- ratify the SEN policy.



- ensure that satisfactory classroom accommodation and teaching resources are available.
- provide secure facilities for the storage of records relating to children in receipt of SEN support.

### **Principal Teacher**

The Principal Teacher will have overall responsibility for the school's provision for children with SEN. The Principal keeps a record of referrals made to NEPS and other outside services.

At the beginning of each school year, the Principal meets with the NEPS psychologist to formulate a plan for the year, including assessments of pupils and professional support for teachers. Given the school's size, some of the duties associated with this responsibility may be delegated to a member of the Special Education Team, as appropriate.

### **Class Teacher**

The Class Teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all children in his/her class, including those selected for supplementary teaching. (Guidelines 2017)

The Class Teacher will

- provide effective teaching and learning opportunities
- support the identification of learning difficulties
- provide Classroom Support Stage 1
- log actions in the Support Plan
- communicate with parents/guardians
- draw up Classroom Support Plans (Stage 1 Continuum of Support) "Interventions with children at stages 2 and 3 should include a classroom support plan to ensure that the children's needs are met for the whole school day" (Guidelines 2017 p7)
- collaborate with the Support Teacher in the development of a Support Plan for each child who is in receipt of supplementary teaching at School Support/School Support Plus Level on the Continuum, by identifying appropriate learning targets and by organising classroom activities to achieve those targets.

A key role of successful support is a high level of consultation and cooperation between the Class Teacher and the Support Teacher. Central to this consultation is the development, implementation and review of student support plans. This consultation will be achieved through formal timetabling at the start of the least once per instructional term, and through informal consultation as the need arises.



### **Support Teachers (SET)**

The central roles of the SET teacher will be to

- a) support the class teacher in optimising teaching and learning opportunities and
- b) provide specialised teaching to those children with identified special educational needs.

Support Teacher responsibilities will consist of both teaching and non-teaching duties.

- The Special Education team's responsibilities give supplementary teaching as per the Continuum of Support. The team will use of a variety of approaches, methodologies and resources to create and work on specific targets using a collaborative approach with class teachers, parents/guardians, students and external agencies
- Student progress is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis as per the Continuum of Support using a collaborative approach.

### **Role of SNA**

The role of an SNA will be to carry out duties based on the care needs of the child. The tasks associated with these duties can be of a primary or secondary nature. The role of the SNA is determined by the NCCA and NCSE guideline as per Department of Education Circular 0030/2014. See appendix 1.

The primary care support tasks may include:

- Toileting.
- Feeding
- Administration of Medicine
- Provision of non-nursing care needs associated with specific medical conditions
- Assistance with mobility and orientation
- Assisting teachers to provide supervision
- Care needs involve frequent interventions including withdrawal of a child from a classroom when essential.
- Assistance with moving and lifting of children, operation of hoists and equipment.
- Assistance with severe communication difficulties including enabling curriculum access for children with physical disabilities or sensory needs and those with significant, and identified social and emotional difficulties.

The secondary care support tasks may include:

- Preparation and tidying of workspaces and classrooms or assisting a child who is not physically able to perform such tasks; to prepare and tidy a workspace, to present materials, to display work or to transition from one lesson activity to another.
- Assistance with the development of the Student Support File for children with Special Educational Needs, with a particular focus on developing a care plan to meet the care needs of the child concerned and the review of such plans.



- Assistance with maintaining a journal and care monitoring system for children including details of attendance and care needs.
- Planning for activities and classes where there may be additional care requirements associated with particular activities.
- Attending meetings as appropriate
- Assistance with enabling a child to access therapy or psycho-educational programmes such as anger management or social skills classes, under the direction of appropriate personnel.
- Assistance to attend or participate in out of school activities: walks, or visits, where such assistance cannot be provided by teaching staff.

### **Role of Parents/Guardians**

The central role of parents/guardians of children with SEN is the same as all parents/guardians, i.e. to support the work of the school and to optimise teaching and learning opportunities for their child at home.

### **Role of Children**

The role of the child with SEN will be that of active participant in their own learning; the extent and nature of this will depend on their strengths and needs.

### **Role of External Bodies and Agencies**

Our school liaises with external professionals such as NEPS Psychologists, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Support Service, the HSE (Health Service Executive), Early Intervention Teams, School Age Teams, Tusla, Visiting Teachers for children with vision impairment, Visiting Teachers for children with hearing loss, and the Inspectorate.

We acknowledge that the needs of many children span both health and education services. We therefore liaise with and contribute to health-led assessment and delivery of interventions and facilitate meetings between parents and various support services. We also endeavour to incorporate relevant recommendations from health professionals in developing support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support.

## **5. Prevention and Early Intervention Strategies**

- Differentiation of the curriculum by the mainstream class teacher to cater for individual strengths and needs. These will be documented on the Support Plan (Stage 1).
- Development and implementation of agreed approaches to the teaching of Literacy and Numeracy to ensure progression and continuity from class to class.
- The use of concrete materials as much as possible and as appropriate.
- Class-based early intervention by the class teacher focusing on the provision of additional individualised support, as and when required.



- Support for children experiencing social/emotional difficulties and problems with memory and concentration.
- Provision of Assistive Technology as appropriate.
- Promotion of parental involvement through their attendance at induction meetings for parents/guardians of incoming 2<sup>nd</sup> classes and the arrangement of formal and informal parent/teacher meetings.

***When identifying and selecting children for additional teaching support, children with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest level of supports.***

## **6. Selection criteria**

The following criteria will be used by our school to select children for supplementary teaching in line with the new model of Special Education Teaching (Circular 13/2017).

1. Children scoring at or below the 12<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardised assessments in Literacy and Numeracy.
2. Children previously in receipt of SET hours who continue to experience significant learning difficulties.
3. Children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) and whose English needs further support as per Primary School Assessment Kit.
4. Children who continue to experience difficulty in academic/social/emotional/sensory/motor despite targeted interventions made by the Class Teacher at Classroom Support (Stage 1) level of the NEPS Continuum of Support.

Students with external assessments may not always require support from the Special Education Team. This will be reviewed on an individual basis and in consultation with parents/guardians, staff and relevant external bodies (where applicable).

## **7. Provision of Supplementary Teaching.**

- Students will be given support as per the Continuum of Support.
- At the end of each instructional term progress is evaluated using a collaborative approach, revising targets and future support.



- Levels of intervention will be reviewed as part of the review process and supplementary teaching with some children may be discontinued when satisfactory progress has been made and targets have been met.

## 8. Monitoring Progress

- The Support Review Record on the Continuum of Support will be completed by the Support Teacher in collaboration with the Class Teacher. This will be carried out at the end of each instructional period.
- Monitoring, assessment and review stages are a collaborative approach between SET, class teachers, parents, students and outside agencies.
- Self-Reflection “My Thoughts About School” (by the child) – as part of the Continuum of Support Review Record.
- Weekly Tests if applicable
- Termly Assessments if applicable (teacher designed or from publishers).
- Standardised Tests at the end of year in Literacy, Numeracy, Spelling and NVRT.
- The Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT-III UK)
- Diagnostic Testing
- Discreet Testing
- Observation
- Teacher Designed Tasks.

## 9. Record Keeping

- Class Teachers will keep a record of teacher designed tests, end of term tests and checklists in an Assessment Folder for their class.
- Psychological Reports, Diagnostic Assessments and Continuum of Support documents for Children with SEN are kept in a secure location under the supervision of the principal, deputy principal and SEN coordinator.





- Additional Care Support Targets Plan for children with SNA access will be kept in a secure location under the supervision of the principal, deputy principal and SEN coordinator.
- Results of Completed Standardised Tests and end of year reports will be kept on the school's secure database system, Aladdin.
- End of Year school reports will be issued to parents/guardians in June via Aladdin Connect.
- All data will be compliant with data protection guidelines.

## **Exemption from the study of Irish**

- Exempting a pupil from the study of Irish will be considered only in exceptional circumstances set out in section 2.2 of the 0054/2022 Circular. The decision to grant an exemption from the study of Irish is made by the principal, but it must be made following detailed discussion with the pupil's parent(s), guardian(s), the class teacher, special education teachers and the pupil. The decision to grant an exemption should only be considered in the circumstances set out in section 2.2.
- An exemption from the study of Irish may be allowed in the following circumstances, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.2.4 or 2.2.5 only in 0054/2022 Circular. See Appendix 2
- The procedures for granting an exemption from Irish are as follows

The steps required for a valid application for an exemption from the study of Irish are set out in DES Circular 0054/2022, see below:

1. A parent/guardian must make an application in writing to the principal of the school for a Certificate of Exemption from the study of Irish on behalf of a pupil.

2. The school staff shall mark the date of receipt of the application on the application form and issue an acknowledgement to the parent(s)/guardian(s) upon receipt of the application.

3. At the earliest opportunity a school official should contact the applicant(s) and:

- discuss the written application with the applicant(s) and confirm the sub-paragraph on which the application is based (as outlined in section 2.2 above) N.B. If a parent/guardian does not confirm the sub-paragraph under which the application is based then the application is null and void and no further processing of the application will take place. Only criteria contained in this Circular can be considered as grounds for an exemption from the study of Irish and no other exceptional circumstances can be considered.

- advise the applicant(s) of the steps involved in processing the application.

- inform the parent(s)/guardian(s)/pupil of the implications of an exemption from the study of Irish for the pupil while in primary education and into the future.



4. The application should be fully processed and the outcome confirmed in writing within 21 school days of receipt of the application.

5. Where a decision is reached that an exemption from the study of Irish may be granted a signed Certificate of Exemption will be issued to the parent(s)/guardian(s) and a copy will be held by the school in the pupil's file. The record keeping requirements are outlined further at 2.3(c) below.

6. The outcome of the application process will be conveyed by the school in writing to the applicant. Where an application is refused, the principal must inform the applicant(s) in writing outlining the reasons for refusal and notifying the applicant(s) that the school's decision may be appealed to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee within 30 calendar days of the date of the written decision.

- Where an exemption is granted, a Certificate of Exemption, signed and dated by the school principal will be issued.

-The Certificate of Exemption will state the name and address of the school, the school roll number, the pupil's name, date of birth and the sub-paragraph under which the exemption is being granted. A Certificate of Exemption is hyperlinked in the checklists within the Guidelines accompanying this Circular, published by the Department on the government website.

-The arrangements for the pupil's learning will be explained to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/pupil.

-It will be explained to the parent(s)/guardian(s) that incidental learning of Irish language may occur through engagement with greetings, phrases, festivals and that a positive attitude to Irish should be fostered by the parent(s)/guardian(s).

-Parent(s)/guardian(s) and the pupil should be informed of the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.

-The application form, all supporting documentation, and a copy of the Certificate of Exemption will be retained by the school in accordance with data protection legislation and will be made available for inspection by authorised officers of the Department. In maintaining such documentation, schools should ensure that they have obtained appropriate parental/guardian consent for the retention and use of such records.

-In addition, where an exemption from the study of Irish is granted, the school should update the pupil's record on the Primary Online Database (POD) as soon as possible to include the reason for that exemption.

- Where an application is refused, a copy of the application form, together with the letter of refusal and all supporting documentation, will be retained by the school in accordance with data protection legislation.
- To support inclusive practices, a pupil who is exempt from the study of Irish should be included in a meaningful way in aspects of Irish language and cultural activities in line with his/her ability and interests. It should be noted that pupils have the option not to exercise the exemption granted, without any loss of the right to exercise it at a future time.



- A pupil who has no understanding of English when enrolled should be provided with intensive English as an Additional Language (EAL) in preparation for his/her full engagement with the curriculum at a level commensurate with his/her ability.
- In order for pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish to be recognised by the Department, for grant payment and teacher allocation purposes, schools will be required on a monthly basis to record data on pupils who are exempt from the study of Irish and the reason for that exemption on the Primary Online Database (POD).
- When a student is transitioning to another school It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that a copy of the pupil's Certificate of Exemption is made available to the receiving school.

-It is recommended that schools use the Education Passport materials developed by the NCCA, to provide information on a pupil's engagement with the study of Irish including details of the granting of an exemption from the study of Irish. The passport is retained in the primary school until the post-primary school principal or designated person with responsibility for initiating pupil information transfers, sends a written request for the pupil's report cards.

## 10. Liaising with Parents/Communicating Information

- The contribution of parents/guardians and communication with parents/guardians is valued and encouraged using various forms of communication; 'Parents' Observation Window', parent-teacher meetings, emailing and phone calls.
- The class teacher will communicate with parents/guardians to discuss concerns in the school, and the SET will communicate with parents/guardians in relation to the students' Student Support Files.
- If a parent is considering availing of external support, ie. Occupational Therapist/Educational Psychologist, parents/guardians are advised to contact and communicate this with the Special Educational Team.

## 11. Timetabling

- Supplementary teaching that children receive is in addition to their regular class programme in literacy and numeracy. Timetables are reviewed at the end of each instructional term.
- Co-teaching will be put in place where it is felt necessary by the class teachers and SET. An example of this collaborative approach could be where two teachers work together to plan, organise, instruct and make assessments on the same group of students for a subject area. If deemed more beneficial to a group being taught by SET, they can be withdrawn.



## 12. Attendance

- An attendance record of children who are withdrawn to the SET rooms should be kept by each SET Teacher.

## 13. Monitoring and Reviewing the SEN Policy

- The Principal, Deputy Principal and SEN Coordinator will monitor and review this policy.

## 14. SEN Policy Success Criteria

A whole school approach to the implementation of our SEN policy will:

- ensure that children with SEN gain access to a broad, balanced curriculum and have opportunity of access to an appropriate education.
- develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning among our pupils.
- improve standards of academic performance and achievement.
- enhance parental involvement in supporting their child's learning.
- increase collaboration between school personnel.

The achievement of these success criteria will be assessed through: feedback from teachers, children and parents/guardians; child's achievements and ongoing analysis of children's academic performance and attainment of personal targets.

### Acknowledgements

- Guidelines for Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (Department of Education & Skills)
- "Managing the Transition to the New Model of Special Education" (Dr. Mairéad De Búrca / INTO 2017)
- Circular 30/2014 Special Needs Assistants
- Circular 13/2017 Special Educational Needs – New Model
- Circular 52/2022 Exemptions from the study of Irish-Primary
- <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/a-new-model-forallocatingspecial-education-teachers-to-mainstream-schools.pdf> Useful websites:
- Department of Education and Skills: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)
- National Council for Special Education: [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)
- National Council for Curriculum Assessment: [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)
- Health Service Executive: [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)



This policy was drawn up in consultation and collaboration with staff, parents and Board of Management of St Vincent de Paul Girls' School.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in October 2023 and will be reviewed regularly.

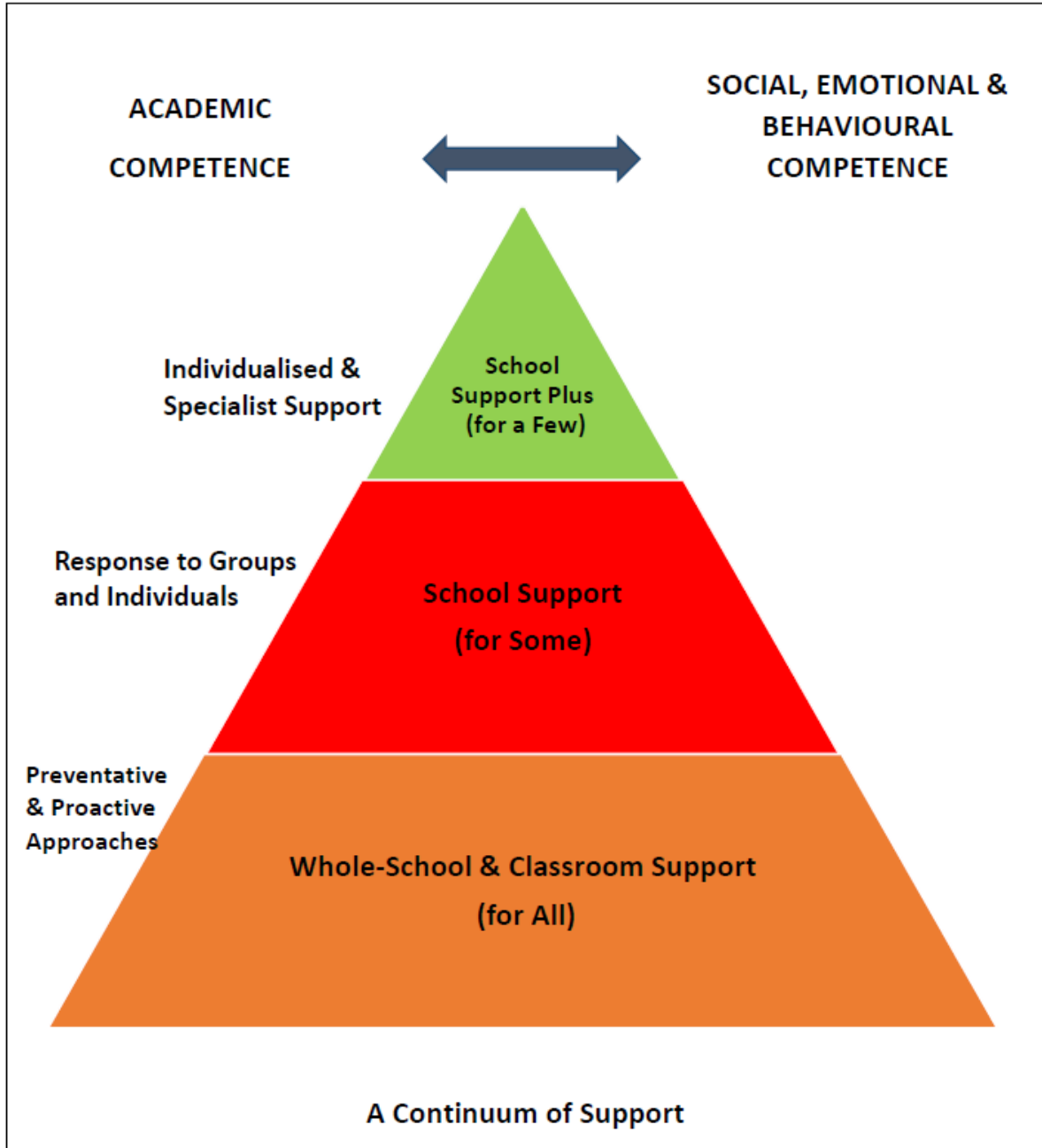
Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Chairperson, Board of Management)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Principal )

## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Continuum of Support





## Appendix 2. Granting the exemption from the study of Irish from Circular 0054/2022

<b>2.2.1(a)</b>	The pupil is not less than 12 years of age on the day of their enrolment or re-enrolment whose education was received outside the State (for a minimum period of three consecutive years) where he/she did not have the opportunity to engage in the study of Irish.
<b>2.2.1(b)</b>	The pupil's education was received outside the State (for a minimum period of three consecutive years) where he/she did not have opportunity to engage in the study of Irish and who is enrolling following the completion of the full course of primary education recognised by another State.
<b>2.2.2</b>	The pupil has at least reached second class and experiences significant literacy difficulties which are an obstacle to their learning across the curriculum and which are persistent despite having had access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy learning in all subjects/across the curriculum and over time and presents with a standardised score on a discrete test in either Word Reading, Reading Comprehension or Spelling at/below the 10th percentile.
<b>2.2.3</b>	The pupil has at least reached second class and experiences a high level of multiple and persistent needs, that persist despite targeted and individualised Student Support Plans to address those needs (over not less than two years) and which are a significant barrier to the pupil's participation and engagement in their learning and school life and who have been given every reasonable opportunity to participate in the learning of Irish in mainstream classes for as long as possible and the Principal is satisfied that the granting of an exemption is in the overall best interests of the pupil <i>concerned</i> .
<b>2.2.4(ii)</b>	The pupil has a recommendation and has been deemed eligible for a place in a recognised special school and/or in a special class in a mainstream school
<b>2.2.5</b>	The pupil's parent(s)/guardian(s) is a/are diplomatic or consular representatives of another country to Ireland irrespective of age or educational history.