



ALEXANDRA COLLEGE DUBLIN

Alexandra College Junior School Learning Support Policy

Aims/Objectives

The Junior School's aim of learning support is to optimize the teaching and learning process for pupils with learning difficulties. The primary objectives of this policy are:

1. For pupils with additional needs to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy during their years in the Junior School.
2. For pupils with additional needs to develop positive self-esteem.
3. For pupils with additional needs to develop a positive attitude about school and learning.
4. To involve parents – (through effective parent/teacher liaison) in taking an active role in the child's education.
5. To establish early intervention programmes for the diagnosis of learning difficulties.
6. To provide supplementary teaching and additional support and resources for these pupils in English and/or mathematics.
7. To support pupils with low achievement and or learning difficulties through a team approach that involves the pupils themselves, their teachers, parents and relevant support personnel.
8. To provide learning support programmes for children who are performing at or below the 10th percentile on nationally standardized tests in English reading and/or mathematics.
9. To develop and implement an individual learning programme for each pupil in receipt of supplementary teaching based on an assessment of needs and a specification of learning targets for the pupil.

Beliefs and Principles

It is our belief that each child is unique and each child brings a unique set of characteristics both strengths and weaknesses to any learning situation.

It is our belief that praise should be public and "problem solving" should be private.

It is our belief that all children should feel secure within the parameters of their classroom, knowing precisely what is expected of them academically and behaviorally.

It is our belief that we must network with other professionals and that is vital to involve and inform parents- they deserve our support and understanding.

In Alexandra College, we have an effective support programme where class teachers and the Learning Support teachers work together to optimize the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve their full potential in literacy and numeracy. Children may be withdrawn individually or in small groups to work with the Learning Support teachers who are aided by a wide range of up to date resources and continuous professional development.

Our programme is based on the following principles:

- Inclusion and respect for all, irrespective of their ability level
- Early identification and early intervention
- Direction of resources towards pupils in greatest need
- Collaboration between class teacher, Learning Support teacher and parents

As the only Froebel school in the country, it is essential that we are seen to always take a child-centred approach and ensure that every girl in the Junior School is given the required support to achieve her true potential.

Research has found that when early intervention is implemented, positive results can be quickly achieved and maintained over the long term. As well as helping school performance, early intervention for learning difficulties also reduces emotional problems associated with failure. Early intervention during primary years also functions as a preventative factor against the development of learning difficulties, such as writing problems, in later years.

The majority of children accessing learning support in the Junior School would have been assessed by an educational psychologist. First class pupils are too young to have a full, formal educational assessment and are therefore assessed by the Learning Support teacher using the Quest Diagnostic Test in both literacy and numeracy.

A new initiative was introduced in November 2018. Touch-type, read and spell (TTRS) is an award winning, multi-sensory course that teaches touch-typing, reading and spelling at the same time. We have currently 33 pupils availing of this programme.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

The Junior School Head with the support, and in consultation with the school staff, shall develop and implement the school policies on learning support and special needs.

Role of Class Teacher

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in her class. She should:

- Bring his/her concerns about a particular child to the attention of the Learning Support Teacher

- Meet with parents to explain the concerns of the school about their child's progress.
- Seek the approval of parents to proceed with further testing.
- Contribute to developing the Individual Profile and Learning Programme with the Learning Support teacher with activities designed to attain those targets.
- Consult with parents and develop strong links between the learning activities of pupils at home and at school.
- Implement the school policies on screening and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in English and in Mathematics by administering and doing appropriate standardized tests i.e., Drumcondra Test to be administered to all pupils from J2-J6 in the month of May
- Differentiate the class curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of all the pupils and shall provide learning activities, which are suitably challenging and which also ensure success and progress.
- Liaise with Learning Support Teacher on a regular basis regarding the pupil's progress.
- Review the pupil's progress regularly and always at the end of an instructional term with the Learning Support.
- Inform parents of particular arrangements in the mainstream classroom that will continue to support their child's needs if supplementary teaching is being reduced or discontinued.

Role of Learning Support Teacher

The Learning Support teacher should:

- Consult with class teachers in identifying pupils who may require additional support
- Coordinating the implementation of whole school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching in line with that specified in the school plan on learning support i.e., time for testing and frequency of testing.
- Develop a plan for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with class teacher and parent
- Update and maintain a plan for each individual or group of pupils in receipt of additional support.
- Consulting with the Junior School Head regarding the purchase of learning resources books and materials.
- Liaise with relevant class teachers on a regular basis regarding the pupil's progress.
- Liaise with class teachers at least once each term: such areas as approaches to language development reading, writing, penmanship and mathematics.
- Discussing outcomes of diagnostic assessment to the relevant parties and based on the outcomes of diagnostic screening to develop a plan in consulting with class teacher.

- Meet with parents regarding any concerns about their child and update them regarding their progress
- Formally assess children if an Irish exemption is requested by parents.

Role of Parents/Guardians

Collaboration and sharing of relevant information between home and school are essential elements of a successful Learning Support policy. Parents/guardians through their unique knowledge of their own children have much to contribute to their child's learning.

Parents/guardians should:

- Share any information, reports or reports pending from health professionals and/or concerns regarding their child's development. Copies of professional reports should be provided to the school at enrolment.
- 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 meeting arranged. By the class teacher or Learning Support teacher
- Engage in all suggested home-based activities

Ratification

This policy was officially ratified by the Board of Management on January 2019.

This policy will be reviewed again in May 2024

Signed: _____

Date: _____