



## **Dominican College Sion Hill**

Students with special educational needs have much in common with other students of the same age. An additional educational need represents only one aspect of a student's development; it should not define the student. There are many other dimensions to a student's development including personality, the ability to communicate (verbal and non-verbal), resilience and strength, the ability to appreciate and enjoy life, and the desire to learn.

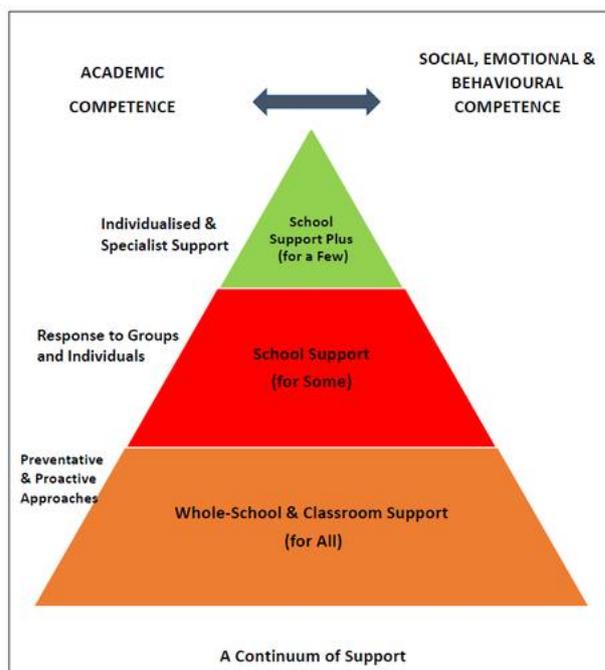
### **Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education means encouraging each young person to take part in the everyday activities of the school and helping every young person to achieve the most from school. It is ensuring that the system adjusts to meet the young person's needs, rather than expecting young people to 'fit' into the system.

### **The Continuum of Support**

The National Educational Psychological Service (often known as NEPS) is a service that supports schools in meeting the needs of students with special educational needs.

NEPS has developed a system of identifying and supporting students, known as the Continuum of Support. This system involves gathering information, planning ways of helping and reviewing progress. The Continuum of Support works at three different levels - In post-primary schools, the three levels of support are called Support for All, School Support (for some) and School Support Plus (for a few).



**Support for All/ Classroom Support** is really about effective classroom teaching and early identification – teachers adjusting their teaching (differentiation) to take into account students’ different needs and abilities.

**School Support (for some)** is needed when what is being done in the ordinary classroom is not enough to meet the needs of the student. Often a learning support or resource teacher is involved and some students, or groups of students receive extra support.

**School Support Plus (for a few)** is generally for students with complex and/or enduring needs. Relatively few students need this level of support. They might need a particular programme of help, with individual supports and specialist interventions. Students getting this kind of help would often have a Support Plan or Individual Education Plan.

The Continuum of Support is a problem-solving model of assessment and intervention that enables us to gather and analyse data, as well as to plan and review the progress of individual pupils.

### **Identification of Need**

Identification of educational need is central to the new model. Using the Continuum of Support framework, schools can identify students’ educational needs, to include academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties.

Many students will have their special educational needs identified prior to their transfer to Dominican College Sion Hill. A “Post Primary Transfer Review” form and application form, as well as school reports are used to gather information on students’ learning from primary schools and parents. This allows us to plan provision and to ensure continuity and progression in the students’ education. Reports are submitted by parents or guardians from relevant professionals and direct contact with the various Primary Schools and with parents is also made.

At Dominican College Sion Hill, all incoming students complete CAT-4 testing (Cognitive Ability Testing). They also complete the NGRT (National Group Reading Test) and the PTM (Progress Test in Maths). This also helps to identify students that will need additional support, intervention and differentiation.

If a parent or guardian suspects that there may be a learning difficulty, they should contact the class tutor, year-head or principal. The student will then be referred to the SEN team who will investigate and monitor the student’s progress. Good communication with the school will help to identify additional educational needs as early as possible. If it transpires that there is an issue, appropriate steps will be taken, such as drawing up an Individual Educational plan/support file, consulting with NEPs or referring the student to an appropriate professional.

## **For Existing Students**

Identification occurs by mainstream subject teachers and Class Tutors through the SEN Referral form, accompanied with sample work or by parents who contact the Principal, the tutor or the resource teacher. Any referral made by a class teacher or tutor must be forwarded to the SEN team to complete a broader profile. It is during this initial assessment that learning, emotional, behavioural and social needs are established.

### **Preliminary screening**

If it is deemed appropriate the SEN team initiate a process of formal and informal assessment.

### **Informal assessment**

This includes:

- Observations from mainstream teachers
- Consultation with parents
- Meeting with student
- Informal assessment of literacy, numeracy, Language and Communication, PSD

### **Formal assessment**

If it deemed necessary formal assessment is then initiated and this includes:

- Review of entrance exam and CAT 4, NGRT and PTM testing.
- Review of in-house exams and reports
- Behavioural record if appropriate
- Referral for psychological report if appropriate
- SEN team administer WIAT 3 to detect any literacy learning difficulties

## **How does a student access Learning Support (L.S.)?**

The SEN team in collaboration with the Student Support Team allocate Learning Support based on students' needs. Such students are prioritised for additional support from the school's annual allocation of resource teaching/learning support teaching hours. Students who are exempt from Irish receive additional support/intervention during Irish time.

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## **How is Additional Support provided?**

All additional teaching support given to a student should build on and complement the support delivered by the class/ subject teacher in the ordinary classroom situation. Additional support is delivered via co-teaching, smaller group and one to one withdrawal, depending on the needs of the student. There is a move away from withdrawal to a more inclusive model where the majority of the needs of students with SEN are met alongside their peers in the classroom, in smaller groups and in a few cases, via one to one withdrawal. The 'Continuum of Support' pyramid highlights this approach.

In some cases, the student may need the additional support of a Special Needs Assistant (SNA) to help them manage their day to day tasks.

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## **Learning Support Teaching**

The Learning Support teacher provides direct teaching to a student with additional educational needs, 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. Learning Support teaching is not a grind, and while it may include material from the mainstream setting, it is primarily designed to focus on building skills that are transferable across the curriculum and beyond. Evidence based interventions are also used during learning support time.

## **Differentiation**

Mainstream subject teachers cater for pupils with a wide range of abilities and needs and who have a diverse range of personal/ home experiences. Subject teachers have the primary responsibility for the educational progress of all pupils in their classes. This includes pupils with special educational needs. Pupils vary in their learning rates and styles.

Differentiation is about matching teaching strategies, approaches and expectations to the range of experiences, abilities, needs and learning styles in a mainstream class. In other words, different teaching methods and approaches work with different pupils. Differentiation is an important means by which a teacher can show each pupil that they are respected and valued. The needs of the majority of pupils within a mainstream class can be met by differentiating teaching approaches for that class.

## **Individual Education Plan (IEP)/ Student Support File**

An individual education plan (IEP)/ student support file is a written plan that guides a student's learning and progress. The IEP sets out the learning goals to be achieved by a student over a certain time period and it lists the teaching strategies, resources and supports that are needed to help a student to reach those goals. It is developed and reviewed by the SEN team and teachers, in conjunction with parents, pupils and where necessary, with others involved in the student's learning.

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