

Special Educational Needs Policy Bennekerry N.S.



Description of the School

Bennekerry N.S is a large school on the outskirts of Carlow town with a current enrolment of 425 pupils under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin. It is a mainstream primary school. It is a two storey building with ramps and a lift where appropriate and two toilets with wheelchair access. There are 16 classrooms, four learning support rooms, an office, a school hall and a staff room. There are 16 class teachers, an administrative principal, 6 full-time Special Education Teachers (SETs) and two full-time Special Needs Assistants. There is a full time secretary and a part-time caretaker.

Belief Statement

All our children have a right to an education, which is appropriate to them as individuals. We want all our children to feel that they are a valued part of our school community. As far as possible, it is our aim to minimise difficulties that children may experience. We, as a staff are dedicated to helping each child flourish in every aspect of the curriculum and help them reach their full potential. The provision of a quality system of learning support and an inclusive curriculum are integral to this commitment. When planning our approaches to teaching and learning throughout the school we take into account the different backgrounds, experiences, interests and strengths that influence the way in which children learn.

Consultation

This policy was formulated in consultation with the teaching staff, SNAs, parents and the Board of Management (BOM)

Rationale

- This policy document aims to outline the school's provision of additional educational support for students with S.E.N.
- It outlines the philosophy that underpins this provision.
- The policy is written in the context of the various pieces of legislation listed below.
- The policy is a working document and will be reviewed regularly.
- The policy is a reflection of our current practice.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all students with S.E.N., including students with exceptional ability, who attend Bennekerry N.S. It is also intended to serve the school community including B.O.M, the Principal, the teaching and ancillary staff and parents.

Legal Framework

Bennekerry N.S. sets out to provide education for all its students, with reference to legislation regarding students with S.E.N. as listed below:

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Education Welfare Act (2000)
- The Equal Status Act (2000)
- The Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill (2003)

- The Equality Act (2004)
- The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)
- The Freedom of Education Acts (1997 and 2003)
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)

This policy is drafted in the context of:

- DES Circular Letters (0013/2017)
- Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools
- The guidelines published by the NCSE
- The guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process 2006
- The Guidelines on the Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools (NEPS).
- The guidelines published by the Special Educational Needs Support Service (SESS)

Aims of the Policy

The principal aim of Special Education Needs Support in Bennekerry N.S. is to provide a positive learning environment, which will foster the academic, social and emotional development of students with learning difficulties and to enable each to realise their individual potential.

Special Education Needs Support provision also seeks to:

- Enable pupils of all abilities to avail of and benefit from an appropriate education.
- Provide students with consistent opportunities to experience success.
- Provide supplementary teaching and additional support in literacy and numeracy.
- Involve parents in the support of their child's education.
- Promote collaboration among teachers in the implementation of a whole school policy on learning support for pupils.
- Protect and enhance the self-esteem of the learner.

The school hopes to achieve the following by updating the SEN policy:

- To guide the implementation of the revised model for allocating special education teaching supports.
- To include the most recent best practice in SEN.
- To reflect the most recent recommendations, most particularly the Continuum of Support at Primary Schools (NEPS).
- To outline our whole school approach to teaching/ learning in relation to pupils with SEN.
- To set out procedures for the enrolment of students with SEN in the school.
- To assist parents in making an informed decision in relation to the enrolment of their child in our school.
- Ensure that students with SEN are educated in an inclusive environment.
- Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the specific needs of students and of the contribution they can make in this area.
- Ensure that SEN is not viewed in isolation, but in the context of the whole school and community.
- Ensure that students with SEN are offered a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.
- Set high standards for students with SEN and provide them with appropriate guidance, encouraging them to achieve to their full potential.
- Develop staff expertise in supporting students with SEN.

- Encourage and foster positive partnerships with parents, in order to achieve appropriate support at home and at school.
- To outline procedures and practices which will be followed in relation to supporting the learning of pupils with SEN.
- To establish communication structures for the involvement of all the partners in the education of pupils with SEN. (Learning Support Guidelines)

Change in allocating special teaching supports

Special Education Circular 0013/2017 provides full details on the revised Special Education Teaching Allocation.

Implementation of the Revised Allocation Model

The following principles are used by Bennekerry N.S. to guide the implementation of the revised model for allocating special education teaching supports. They form a whole-school approach to provision for pupils with special educational needs in our school.

Principles to guide the Implementation Process

- Resources provided to support pupils with special educational needs are used to facilitate the development of truly inclusive schools.
- Supports provided to pupils with special educational needs are based on identified needs and are informed by regular reviews of progress (in consultation with parents and pupils) as outlined in the Continuum of Support Guidelines.
- The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all pupils in the classroom, including pupils with special educational needs.
- Special education teaching supports provided to schools are used solely for the support of pupils with identified special educational needs, including those pupils for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL). The special education teaching supports are not used to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio in mainstream classes. Neither are they used to allow any special education teacher sole responsibility for the delivery of any curriculum subject to any particular class.
- Pupils with the greatest levels of need have access to the greatest level of support, and whenever possible, these pupils are supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.
- The school establishes and maintains a core team of teachers to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. All members have the necessary experience and access to continuing professional development to support the diverse needs of pupils with special educational needs.

A three-step process to support pupils with special educational needs

In Bennekerry N.S. a three-step process is in place to guide identification, intervention and monitoring of outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

Step 1 - The Continuum of Support

Bennekerry N.S. uses the Continuum of Support framework set out by the Department of Education to assist in identifying and responding to pupils' needs. This framework recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long term, and that pupils require different levels of support depending on their identified educational needs. Using this framework helps to ensure that interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support, and that they are informed by careful monitoring of progress.

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

Identification of educational needs is central to the new model. By using the Continuum of Support framework, the staff in Bennekerry N.S. can identify pupils' educational needs, to include academic, social and emotional needs, as well as needs associated with physical, sensory, language and communication difficulties. The framework emphasises the importance of looking at a pupil's needs in context, and provides useful resources to support this (for example, Learning Environment Checklist, Teacher Checklist for Whole-class Structures and Supports).

The Continuum of Support enables schools to identify and respond to needs in a flexible way. This means that needs can be responded to as early as possible. Of course, the principle that pupils with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest levels of support is of primary importance. This approach is also supported by information and engagement with external professionals, as required.

Level 1 - Classroom Support

The class teacher considers how to differentiate the learning programme effectively to accommodate the needs of all pupils in their class.

A classroom support plan is developed and / or adjusted over time for those pupils who do not respond appropriately to the differentiated programme.

This is informed by some or all of the following:

- Parental consultation – to include Learning Questionnaire at the beginning of each year
- Teacher observation records
- Teacher-designed measures / assessments
- Basic needs checklist *
- Learning environment checklist*
- Pupil consultation - My Thoughts About School Checklist, Literacy and numeracy tests, Reading Questionnaire
- Screening tests of language skills

A Classroom Support plan runs for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.

These checklists are available in the *Continuum of Support Guidelines for Teachers

Level 2 - School Support

At this level a Support Plan is devised and informed by some or all of the following:

- Teacher observation records
- Teacher-designed measures / assessments
- Parent and pupil interviews
- Learning environment checklist
- Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy
- Formal observation of behaviour including ABC charts, frequency measures
- Functional assessment as appropriate, including screening measure for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties

A support plan at this level may detail suitable teaching approaches including team-teaching, small group or individual tuition.

A School Support Plan operates for an agreed period of time and is subject to review.

Level 3 - School Support Plus

This level of the Continuum is informed by a detailed, systematic approach to information gathering and assessment using a broad range of formal and informal assessment tools, reports from outside professionals (as appropriate) and may include:

- Teacher observation and teacher-designed measures
- Parent and pupil interviews
- Functional assessment testing such as measures of cognitive ability; social, emotional and behavioural functioning; adaptive functioning etc.
- Results of standardised tests

Data generated from this process are then used to plan an appropriate intervention and can serve as a baseline against which to map progress. A support plan at this level is likely to be more detailed and individualised, and to include longer term planning and consultation.

Educational planning

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is enhanced through clear identification processes and careful planning of interventions to address academic and/or personal and social development needs. Identification of needs, planning, target-setting and monitoring of outcomes are essential elements of an integrated and collaborative problem-solving process. In Bennekerry N.S., the process involves the class teacher, special education teachers, parents, the pupil and relevant professionals. Interventions draw on evidence-informed practice and the professional knowledge and experience of teachers. These interventions reflect the priority learning needs of pupils, as well as building on their strengths and interests.

Support plans set out

- the agreed targets
- the resources required
- the strategies for implementation
- time-frame for review

Student Support File

A Student Support File Template has been developed by the staff in Bennekerry N.S. to enable the school to plan interventions and to track a pupil's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates teachers in documenting progress and needs over time and assists them in providing an appropriate level of support to pupils, in line with their level of need. Following a period of intervention and review of progress, a decision is made as to the appropriate level of support required by the pupil. This may result in a decision to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or move to a higher or lower level of support.

As special educational needs can vary from mild to transient to significant and enduring, educational planning reflect the level of need of the individual pupil. In this regard, the Student Support File facilitates a graduated response across the different levels of the Continuum: Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus. For pupils with significant, enduring and complex needs, collaboration with external professionals, including multi-disciplinary teams, will be engaged to work with the child (for example, occupational therapist, speech and language therapist and psychologist).

Step 2 - Meeting the Needs

Having identified a pupil's needs and the educational planning required to meet those needs, this second step emphasises the importance of effective teaching and learning strategies.

The role of the class teacher

Effective teaching and learning is critically important for all pupils, and especially for those with special educational needs. Meaningful inclusion implies that all pupils are taught in stimulating and supportive classroom environments where they are respected and valued. Mainstream class teachers have first-line responsibility for the education of all pupils in their classes. Accordingly, classroom teachers plan their lessons carefully to try to address the diverse needs within the classroom. They adapt their teaching approaches as the need arises for some pupils whose individual progress, application, motivation, communication, behaviour or interaction with peers are causes for concern. This may require targeted interventions to develop relevant adaptive skills related to these needs. All mainstream class teachers in Bennekerry N.S. strive to implement teaching approaches and methodologies that facilitate the meaningful inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. These include:

- Co-operative teaching and learning within mainstream classrooms
- Collaborative problem-solving activities
- Heterogeneous group work
- Differentiation
- Interventions to promote social and emotional competence
- Embedding Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching, learning and assessment

In Bennekerry N.S. we believe that every pupil needs to be taught a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate to his/her developmental level. Pupils' levels of interest, attention, concentration and persistence are gradually developed, extended and rewarded, using appropriate teaching strategies. To cater for the range of learning needs in any class, mainstream class teachers regularly differentiate their lessons.

This is achieved by:

- Varying the level, structure, mode of instruction and pace of lessons to meet individual needs
- Adapting lessons to take account of pupils' interests
- Matching tasks to pupils' abilities and needs
- Adapting and utilising resources, including the use of technology
- Aspiring towards suitably challenging learning outcomes and assessing accordingly

Teachers in Bennekerry N.S. aim to make lessons accessible to a broad range of pupils through the use of a variety of appropriate teaching approaches and methodologies, including active learning, small-group tuition, individual teaching, and scaffolded instruction. This, at times, requires environmental adaptations to promote curricular access.

The role of the Special Education Teacher (S.E.T.)

Special education teachers in Bennekerry N.S. are familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and to meet a variety of needs. Teaching approaches include a combination of team-teaching initiatives, co-operative teaching, early intervention and small group or individual support. Depending on the learning needs identified, a pupil with special educational needs may be supported at classroom level, or through mainstream classroom placement with additional teaching delivered through in-class or withdrawal support models. Some pupils with more complex and enduring needs may require specific methodologies,

teaching approaches and/or learning activities. Such interventions are based on careful identification of strengths and needs, including multi-disciplinary assessment, when necessary.

Special education teachers, in consultation with class teachers, plan their interventions carefully to address pupils' priority learning needs and to achieve the targets identified in the relevant Continuum of Support plan. Short-term planning reflects the Support Plan targets and breaks down the development of skills and content into small incremental steps to address each pupil's specific needs on a weekly basis. Outcomes for pupils are routinely assessed, recorded and used to review progress. These outcomes are also used to inform the targets for the next phase of intervention.

Early intervention and prevention

In view of the substantial international evidence that early-intervention and prevention programmes can lead to improved outcomes for pupils, school leaders should ensure that some teaching resources are used for this purpose. After engaging in a process of self-reflection and review, they will become aware of whole-school issues that may be addressed through early-intervention programmes, which are evidence-based and which are responsive to the local context.

Bennekerry N.S. endeavours to develop and trial new approaches and to use assessment data to evaluate the efficacy of these interventions. We believe that developing and sharing successful practice has the potential to contribute to improvements in the overall provision for pupils with special educational needs.

At times, Bennekerry N.S. may deploy additional teaching resources in junior classes to strengthen station teaching approaches which target the promotion of language, literacy and numeracy skills. The use of early-intervention and prevention programmes helps mitigate the development of learning, social and emotional difficulties. Our initiatives at this early stage include

- **Station Teaching in Literacy and Maths.** Station-teaching in the Infants classes in literacy and maths which incorporates Ready Set Go Maths, Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Oral Language, Reading and Writing.
- **The Reading Recovery Programme,** which is an early intervention literacy programme aimed at Senior Infants and 1st Class. It is designed to provide children, who have particular difficulties in reading and writing after their first and /or second year in primary school, with a period of intensive, individual teaching. The aim of the programme is to help these children develop effective literacy strategies and utilises high quality levelled reading material.
- **The Literacy Lift-Off Programme,** which is aimed at 1st Class, is an intensive programme of reading and writing. Pupils are given lots of opportunities to read high quality books at their own level of competency. The principles of Literacy Lift Off are built upon the principles of the "Reading Recovery" Programme. Literacy Lift Off gradually lifts the complexity of what the children can do in both reading and writing by equipping them with effective literacy strategies.

As pupils rise through the school, other initiatives include:

- **Peer-Tutoring** is an intensive literacy intervention which utilises a buddy system that helps children to develop reading fluency and reading comprehension and enrich children's vocabulary.
- **Guided Comprehension** is also an intensive literacy based intervention programme which utilises high quality differentiated reading material. Guided Comprehension enhances different elements of literacy including developing reading comprehension strategies and reading fluency. It is also called Guided Reading.
- **Differentiated Class Novels** are taught to children in the senior classes to help children enrich their vocabulary and develop their reading fluency and reading comprehension skills.

- **Team-teaching in Maths:** The implementation of in-class Maths team teaching to give intensive support to pupils and equip them with necessary mathematical language, skills and concepts.

Bennekerry N.S. recognises the importance of seeking advice and training in well-validated programmes to address behavioural and emotional needs. At present, the Weaving Well-Being programme is introduced in Second Class and continues through to Sixth Class as a means of helping pupils to deal with anxiety and build resilience. This programme is implemented in an intensive manner, for the purpose intended and includes frequent opportunities for pupils to practise skills. It was piloted in 2017-18 with a small group and was adopted for general use as it was deemed successful. In the Infant cycle and 1st class, lessons from Walk Tall, Fun Friends and specific lessons which are designed to help build social skills, self-esteem and emotional resilience are taught. Extra resources from “101 Games for Self-Esteem” (Jenny Mosely and Helen Sonnet) and “101 Activities for Social and Emotional Resilience” (Sue Jennings) may be used when relevant.

Target-setting

We believe that good target-setting is central to effective teaching and learning for pupils with special education needs. In Bennekerry N.S. targets are expressed in a way that is measurable and observable, and reflect the specific special educational needs of individual pupils (for example, focus on social and emotional difficulties if that is a primary area of concern). The teachers endeavour to set targets which are achievable within a specified time frame and also challenge and build on existing knowledge and address pupils’ holistic needs.

Best practice indicates that **targets** should be

- few in number
- strengths based
- informed by priority learning needs
- directly linked to suitable interventions
- based on the evidence collected through both formal and informal assessment approaches
- developed collaboratively - teachers of SEN pupils in Bennekerry N.S. consult with parents when setting targets and reviewing progress. The views of pupils are also included in this process, through their direct involvement in the discussion or by gathering their views in advance of the review process. We believe that this collaboration will help ensure that targets are relevant, meaningful, realistic, and that they draw on the strengths and interests of pupils.

Step 3 - Monitoring and recording outcomes for pupils with special educational needs

This stage of the process is informed by effective measurement of baseline performance, including the use of criterion-referenced tests and other methods of assessment (teacher-designed tests, checklists, samples of work, observation) that allow pupils to demonstrate their progress. This leads to the establishment of specific targets to be achieved within a defined timeframe.

Monitoring outcomes is part of a dynamic process of identification, target-setting, intervention and review, which in turn leads to adjustments in support plans. The Student Support File provides the teachers in Bennekerry N.S. with a useful resource to support and record this process. It includes a Support Review Record to guide teachers when monitoring progress and reviewing outcomes with parents and pupils. We believe that such monitoring of progress, and subsequent adaptation of support plans, are key drivers of effective practice.

In addition to monitoring outcomes at the individual level, we believe that it is also important to review outcomes at group, class and whole-school level. This review includes measures of attainment, communication, independence, attendance, social inclusion and well-being (for example, sense of belonging and connectedness to school) for pupils with special educational needs.

Allocating special education teaching resources to effectively meet needs

Special education teachers are deployed to address the needs of pupils with special educational needs in Bennekerry N.S. An important aspect of the revised allocation model is that additional teaching supports are deployed according to identified needs, rather than being based on a diagnosis of disability. This gives schools greater autonomy and flexibility in how they allocate special education teaching resources. Schools may deploy special education teachers in a variety of ways in order to effectively meet pupils' needs (for example, in-class support, group withdrawal).

In Bennekerry N.S., we believe that effective communication and engagement with parents is critically important in moving towards a needs-based approach to the allocation of additional teaching resources. This is enhanced when we consult parents in relation to their child's needs, support plan, and when they are involved in reviews of progress. When allocating teaching resources, the management and staff of Bennekerry N.S. are mindful of the benefits of early-intervention and prevention programmes and allocate teaching resources as required, based on identified needs and school context. Bennekerry N.S. aims to strike a balance between in-class support, group and individual support. Importantly, the level and type of support reflects the specific targets of individual pupils as set out in their support plans and is also informed by careful monitoring and review of progress. In this way, following a period of intervention, some pupils may no longer require additional teaching supports, some may require the same level, while others may require more intensive supports, thus progressing to the next level. When deploying teaching resources, Bennekerry N.S. recognises the essential need to maintain time for co-ordinating, planning and reviewing activities regularly to ensure effective and optimal use of supports. Co-ordination time is, however, kept to a minimum in order to ensure that teaching time is maximised. Additionally, Bennekerry N.S. acknowledges the fact that flexibility in terms of resource allocation is required to allow for emerging needs during the school year. In Bennekerry N.S. the Principal and S.E.N. co-ordinator endeavour to inform the SETs and whole staff of C.P.D. opportunities, especially when a training opportunity arises for their particular caseload.

Planning the allocation of special education teaching supports

In planning the allocation of additional teaching supports, the over-riding principle is that resources are deployed to address the identified needs of pupils. Importantly, those with the highest level of need will have access to the greatest level of support. In addition to literacy and numeracy difficulties, many pupils will have specific needs in such areas as oral language, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development and application to learning.

The *Planning Template* used in Bennekerry N.S. to Guide the Allocation of Additional Teaching Supports for Pupils with Special Educational Needs contains the following areas:

Action 1: Identification of pupils with special educational needs

- Review existing information on pupils' needs, using school-based data, and any information from parents and external professionals.
- Engage in additional screening and data gathering as required, using informal and formal assessment approaches (for example, teacher observations, information on social and emotional competence, standardised tests, diagnostic tests)
- Identify all pupils with special educational needs in the school.
- Match their needs to the appropriate level on the Continuum of Support.

Action 2: Setting targets

- Based on individual needs, set clear learning targets for each pupil at each level of the Continuum of Support.

Action 3: Planning teaching methods and approaches

- Identify the level and type of intervention required to meet targets for each pupil on the Continuum of Support.
- Schools should consider methodologies best suited to promoting meaningful inclusion such as differentiation, heterogeneous grouping, team-teaching and small group teaching.
- They should also be mindful that the interventions and supports that they are using are evidence-informed.

Action 4: Organising early- intervention and prevention programmes

Based on identified needs, choose evidence-informed early- intervention/prevention programmes to address concerns. Identify time needed and staffing commitment required.

Action 5: Organising and deploying special education teaching resources

Cross-reference the needs of pupils at School Support and School Support Plus levels and consider common needs that can be met by grouping to ensure effective and efficient teaching and learning approaches. Agree which teacher(s) who will cater for these groups/individuals and when and where the teaching will take place. Be mindful of the requirement that pupils with the greatest level of need should receive the greatest level of support from teachers with relevant expertise.

A Whole-School Approach

Good practice in the identification of need, education planning, and allocation of special education teaching is supported through effective whole-school planning. This following section outlines the key elements of the inclusive whole-school approach to supporting pupils with special educational needs in Bennekerry N.S.

Inclusive Education

The NCSE (2011) described inclusion as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners. It involves removing barriers so that each learner will be enabled to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her schooling. We believe that the whole-school approach to special educational needs provision in Bennekerry N.S. should reflect the Department's commitment to the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools.

The whole school approach of Bennekerry N.S. endeavours to foster an inclusive culture which is characterised by:

- A positive ethos and learning environment whereby all pupils, including those with special educational needs, feel welcome and experience a sense of community and belonging
- An emphasis on promoting pupils' participation and active engagement in their learning and in the life of the school
- A commitment to developing pupils' academic, social, emotional and independent living skills
- A focus on high aspirations and on improving outcomes for all pupils

Whole School Planning

When implementing the revised allocation model to address the needs of pupils with special educational needs, Bennekerry N.S. has adopted a whole-school approach to programme planning and to the implementation of early-intervention and prevention programmes. In order to achieve this, we in Bennekerry N.S. have adapted our existing special educational needs policies to guide the new approach to the allocation of resources. A whole-school approach involves collaborative action by our school community (in consultation with parents, pupils, SNAs, class teachers, SETs, Principal) to improve pupil learning, behaviour and well-being. It encompasses a process of reflection, planning and review of policies and practices, and includes an evaluation of how pupils with special educational needs are identified by the school, the interventions that are put

in place to meet their needs and how the outcomes of those interventions are measured and monitored. The whole-school approach in Bennekerry N.S. addresses the full continuum of needs – ranging from milder and more transient needs to difficulties that are severe and enduring (for example, significant learning, sensory, physical, communication, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties). The school management of Bennekerry N.S. recognises that a small minority of pupils with significant and enduring needs may require a more specialist setting (for example, special class or special school placement).

To assist in reflecting on our provision for pupils with special educational needs Bennekerry N.S. utilises a Self-Reflective Questionnaire (One for pupils and another for parents). It also uses the publication 'A Quality Framework for Primary Schools (DES, 2016)' to help examine the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs. The domains and statements of practice are utilised to enable the teachers and school leaders in our school to review their practices, to identify what they are doing well, and to recognise aspects of the school's work that could be further developed to improve learning experiences and outcomes for these pupils.

Role of School Principal

The *Learning Support Guidelines* (2000, p.39) outlined the principal teacher's overall responsibility for the education of children with special educational needs. Under the new allocation model, the principal's leadership role is central and includes the following:

- Developing inclusive whole-school policies and monitoring their implementation
 - Assigning staff strategically to teaching roles, including special education roles
 - Co-ordinating teachers' work to ensure continuity of provision for all pupils
 - Ensure that whole-school procedures are established to facilitate the effective involvement of parents, pupils and external professionals / agencies
 - Ensuring that effective systems are implemented to identify pupils' needs and that progress is monitored methodically
 - Facilitate the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to education of pupils with special educational needs, and ensure that all school staff (class teachers, special education teachers and special needs assistants) are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities in this area
- As a result of the school's size and context, some of the Principal's actions above are delegated to a member of staff (Special Needs Co-ordinator Ms. Patricia Bowe). The principal retains overall responsibility for the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Role of Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)

In conjunction with the Principal the SENCO in Bennekerry N.S. will

- Assume responsibility for the implementation and review of school policies on SEN
- Manage a tracking system at whole-school level to identify and monitor the progress of children with learning difficulties
- Maintain the listing and safe storage of psychological reports on children with special needs and also arrange for the confidential disposal of records when the need arises
- Co-ordinate the case-loads and timetables of SETs and SNA.
- Advise teachers on procedures for availing of special needs services so that this information can be passed on to parents if necessary.
- Co-ordinate the implementation of whole school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching in line with school policies and the DES new model of SEN (Circular 0013/2017)

- Assist designated SETs in preparing and applying for supports for children with SEN – access to SNA support, Assistive Technology grants, specialised equipment and furniture and Irish exemptions
- Assist designated SETs in completing NCSE forms and applications such as School Care Needs Profile, School Leavers, BCN1 forms and SNA appeals when required
- Assist designated SETs as they liaise with parents of children with special needs and with external personnel (psychologists, therapists, SENO etc.) and arranging and accommodating meetings when required
- Continue to coordinate and extend the use of ICT to allow shared access to class support records, student support plans and collaborative progress reviews
- Promote professional development opportunities in relation to SEN within the Special Education Team, with class teachers and SNAs
- Remain informed of current best practice within the Special Education area

Parental Engagement

The staff and management of Bennekerry N.S. recognise that good parental engagement is a critical factor in enhancing outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

Parents are consulted

- in relation to their children's needs and strengths
- on the supports and strategies being developed to support their children
- when they are involved in regular reviews of progress.

The Continuum of Support process and use of the Student Support File provide valuable opportunities for the school personnel to engage with parents and to build a collaborative approach to identifying and responding to the needs of pupils with special educational needs.

Pupil Engagement

Good engagement and participation in their own education has many associated benefits for pupils. This is particularly important for pupils with special educational needs and can help enhance their academic and social and emotional outcomes. Engagement is enhanced when schools listen to and build on pupils' interests, aspirations and strengths when developing educational interventions. This involves actively including pupils in a shared assessment for learning process, setting shared learning objectives, and jointly reviewing progress. Pupil participation is supported through teaching that is responsive to the personal needs of the learner, and is further enhanced by structuring and pacing learning experiences that are challenging, engaging and enjoyable. The Student Support File offers a useful framework for promoting pupil engagement and participation at all stages of educational planning and review. At a whole-school level, Bennekerry N.S. encourages pupil engagement and participation so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have opportunities to share their views on issues that affect them in school, and so contribute to reviews of relevant policies and practices in our school.

Engagement with External Bodies and Agencies

Support and guidance is available to teachers from external professionals such as NEPS Psychologists, Special Education Needs Organisers (SENO), the NCSE Support Services, the Inspectorate, and allied health professionals. Bennekerry N.S. has established procedures/protocols for liaising with these services and bodies in order to optimise the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs at the individual, group or whole-school level. We believe that this is especially important for those pupils with more significant and enduring needs. These children benefit from a multi-disciplinary approach to identify their needs and develop interventions. The needs of many pupils span both health and education services. Health services (HSE and HSE-funded services) will continue to play an important role in early identification, assessment and diagnosis, intervention and review of pupils with special educational needs.

Bennekerry N.S. is familiar with the range of health services in our locality, including referral pathways. The posters designed to assist professionals in this area are available in the SET rooms, Principal's Office and Staff Room. We believe that co-ordination is enhanced when the staff of Bennekerry N.S. liaise with and contribute to health-led assessment and delivery of interventions. Our school facilitates meetings between parents and various support services. The staff in Bennekerry N.S. endeavour to incorporate relevant recommendations from health professionals in developing support plans at each level of the Continuum of Support.

Transitions

Good planning and support for transition helps to ensure the successful transfer of pupils from primary school to post-primary school and between special and mainstream settings. Effective transition support and planning can enhance the educational experience of the child and help reduce potential anxiety, particularly for the S.E.N. pupils. Links are already established with 'transition' schools in the area for our pupils. Arrival meetings with these schools have helped ease the anxiety levels for the children in our school. To support the reporting and transfer of pupil information from primary to post-primary schools Bennekerry N.S. utilises

- 6th Class Report Card
- My Profile sheet (for children)
- My Child's Profile sheet (for parents)
- A Special Educational Needs Summary Form to support the sharing of information for children with identified learning needs.

Continuing Professional Development (C.P.D.)

Bennekerry N.S. has established and intends to maintain skilled special education support teams to guide provision. Since all teachers have responsibility for teaching pupils with special educational needs, the management of Bennekerry N.S. encourages all staff members to engage in appropriate CPD to develop the capacity of our school to meet the educational needs of all pupils. The staff of Bennekerry N.S. regularly review their ongoing professional development needs, with reference to the provision of quality teaching and learning in both the mainstream classroom and special education settings.

Admission Policy for Pupils with SEN

The Department of Education acknowledges the very significant progress made by schools in developing inclusive practices and provision whereby the vast majority of pupils with special educational needs now attend mainstream schools. It also recognises that a small minority of pupils with significant and enduring needs may require a more specialist setting (for example, special class or special school placement). Bennekerry N.S. aims to meet the needs of any child whom the parent wishes to register at the school as long as a place is available, and the admission criteria are fulfilled. The Education For Persons with Disabilities Act 2004 states that '*A child is entitled to attend the school which is most suited to his or her overall needs*'. No child will be refused admission to Bennekerry N.S. solely on the grounds that s/he has SEN except where the provision required is incompatible with that available in our school.

The Admission Policy for pupils with SEN is as follows:

- The BOM, through the Principal, has the right to request a copy of the child's medical/psychological report or where such a report is not available to request that the child be assessed immediately.
- The purpose of this assessment report is to assist the school in establishing the education and training needs of the child relevant to his/her disability and special needs and to profile the support services required.
- Following receipt of the report the Principal will assess how the school could meet the needs specified in the report.

- Where the Principal advises the BOM that further resources are required, it will, prior to enrolment request the Department of Education and Science (DES) or National Council for Special Education (NCSE see Circular 01/05)) to provide the resources required to meet the needs of the child as outlined in the psychological or medical report. These resources may include, for example, access to or the provision of any of a combination of the following: visiting teacher service, resource teacher for special needs, SNA, specialised equipment or furniture, transport services or other. It will be necessary for the BOM of Bennekerry N.S. to identify health and safety issues arising from the enrolment of a child with special needs, for example, safe access, suitable toilets or toileting provision, adequate supervision and administering of medicine
- The school will meet with the parents or if necessary a full-case conference involving all parties should be held.
- It may be necessary for the BOM to decide to defer enrolment of a particular child pending the provision of appropriate resources (EPSEN Act 2004).
- SEN children will be fully integrated unless it is inconsistent with the best interests of the child or effective educational provision for other children. (EPSEN 2004)
- The Education Act 1998 states that the BOM must ensure that the educational needs of all students must be identified and provided for
- Under the Disability Bill 2004 schools must ensure to promote equality and social inclusion for all. It is important to promote and foster in school communities an environment that encourages pupils to attend school and to participate fully in school life. (Education Welfare Act 2000)

Communication

Communication with Class Teachers

- The SENCO and the SETs will be in regular informal liaison with the class teachers.

Communication with Parents

- Parent/teacher meetings will be held annually to meet with parents of children on the SEN register
- If the parent or teacher has any concerns, further meetings can be held to discuss these concerns
- Communication between parents and SET or class teacher may be through notes in the homework journal or on work sheets in folders of work.

Communication with BOM

- The BOM will be kept informed of the SEN provision on a regular basis by the Principal.

Whole-School Collaboration

- SEN issues will appear on the agenda of staff meetings and Post holders meetings when necessary. The SEN team and Principal will co-ordinate this process.

Communication with Outside Agencies

- Regular liaison with outside agencies will be maintained by the Principal, SENCO and the SEN teachers.

Communication with Principal

- The principal will be in regular contact with the SENCO and all members of SEN staff.

Record-Keeping

A full record of psychological reports, other reports, Student Support Files and records of meetings are kept in the individual student's file in a central, secure location (in a locked press or cabinet) in the school. All information is managed in accordance with the directives of both the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts. (GDPR)

Exemptions from Irish

The School Management of Bennekerry N.S. is required to observe the following prescribed procedures in relation to granting pupils exemptions from Irish:

- A written application for exemption will be made by a parent or guardian to the principal of the school. This application will specify the grounds on which the exemption is sought. It will be accompanied by documentary evidence of age and previous schooling as appropriate to the grounds cited.
- The school authorities will satisfy themselves as to the documentary evidence submitted.
- The school authorities will prepare a full report on the student in consultation with relevant teachers.
- Where exemption is being sought under sub-paragraph 1(c) of Circular 12/96, the parent or guardian will be required to furnish reports from a qualified psychologist and appropriate medical specialist as appropriate.
- A decision to grant exemption will be conveyed to the parent or guardian by way of a written certificate, signed by the school principal, that the exemption has been given in accordance with this Circular. The certificate will also cite the name, address and type of school, the student's name and date of birth, the sub-paragraph under which the exemption is being granted and the specific grounds for exemption. Where the exemption is being granted under sub-paragraph 1(c) of Circular 12/96, the name and address of the qualified psychologist and the date of the psychologist's report and the name of the medical specialist and date of report, if applicable, will be included.
- The application, school report, psychologist's report, report of medical specialist, copy of certificate of exemption and other relevant documents will be retained by the school and will be made available for inspection by authorised officers of the Department.
- A copy of the exemption certificate will be given to the parent or guardian of the pupil being exempted
- A copy of the exemption certification should be sent to the relevant second level school when the pupil in question has completed her/his primary education.

Priority areas for Development

- Implementation of the Weaving Well-Being programme to all classes from 2nd-6th in 2018-19. Additional staff members to receive CPD in relation to the programme.
- Identifying suitable lessons for the Infant cycle and 1st class to improve social skills and the building of relationships.
- Extend use of the school server for access to Student Support Files
- Ongoing professional development opportunities for staff in the area of special education.
- Raising teacher awareness of, and expertise in, differentiated teaching methodologies.
- Publication of the SEN Policy on the school website so that all parents have access to the information.

Communication, Monitoring and Reviewing

This policy will be communicated to staff and the school community as appropriate and will be subjected to regular review. It will be reviewed initially after one year and then every three years, unless there is a compelling reason to review it earlier. THE SENCO will be responsible for leading this process.

The BoM will ensure that SEN provision is an integral part of the school development plan and will evaluate the effectiveness and success of this policy by monitoring:

- The standards obtained by children with special needs
- The number of children at each of the three stages: Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus
- The level and pattern of help (i.e. average time allocated and the balance of in-class and withdrawal support)
- Views of parents
- Visits from specialist teachers
- Staff views on in-service
- Children's views

Ratified by the Board of Management on 22 October 2018

Signed: *Deirdre Burke* (Chairperson)

Signed: *Jonie Cleary* (Principal)