**Learning Support Policy**

This policy was drawn up by the Principal, Staff and Learning Support team of Redwood NS at a series of consultative meetings which took place during June 2013.

# Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to provide practical guidance for teachers, parents and other interested persons on the provision of effective learning support to pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties and to fulfil our obligations under the Education Act, 1998.

# Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

In our school we are dedicated to helping each child to achieve his/her individual potential. The provision of a quality system of Learning Support is integral to this commitment.

# Aims

Through the implementation of this policy we strive to:

1. Facilitate pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level.
2. Develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes to school and learning.
3. Enable pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners within their own ability.
4. Involve parents in supporting their children’s learning.
5. Promote collaboration among teachers.

# Guidelines

The following procedures are being implemented as a means of responding effectively to pupils’ individual learning needs.

1. Prevention Strategies

As a means of preventing the occurrence of learning difficulties, the following strategies are being implemented:

* + development and implementation of agreed approaches to language development e.g. phonological awareness (Jolly Phonics, Newell) and to the teaching of other aspects of the English and Maths programmes e.g. Maths language; Maths games, Lift-off oral language.
	+ class-based early intervention by the class teacher resulting in the provision of additional individualised support;
	+ promotion of parental involvement through their attendance at an induction meeting for the parents of incoming Junior Infants, the provision of the ‘Tips for Parents’ booklet, the arrangement of formal and informal Parent/Teacher Meetings and the delivery of programmes for parents e.g. Forward Together.
	+ implementation of Paired Reading programmes – Buddy reading in school and paired reading at home.
	+ ongoing observation and assessment.

# Early Intervention Programme

* + Early intervention begins for pupils in Senior Infants in response to the class teacher’s observations and/or the results of the Middle Infant Screening Test (MIST), Belfield and Jolly Phonics Reading assessment test.
	+ The school year is divided into three instructional terms.
	+ Taking account of the level of provision of Learning Support to our school, lessons take place on Wednesday & Thursday and are approximately thirty to forty minutes duration, generally provided as in class support.
	+ The Class teacher in consultation with the Learning Support Teacher decides the size of groups, taking into account the individual learning needs of pupils and the overall caseload.
	+ One-to-one teaching is provided where necessary.
	+ Lessons focus on the development of phonemic awareness, word identification strategies, oral work, silent reading, dictation exercises, word building skills, comprehension skills and mathematical procedures and concepts.
1. Selection of Pupils for Supplementary Teaching
	* From Senior Infants upwards, all pupils are screened annually using standardised tests. The tests in use are MIST, Jolly Phonics Reading Assessment, MICRA T and SIGMA T and are administered by the class teacher.
	* Priority for Learning Support is given to those pupils who perform at or below the 12th percentile, excluding in the main pupils who receive Resource Teaching.
	* In the case of pupils performing at or below the 12th percentile, the screening process is followed by a consultative meeting between the class teacher, the parents and the Learning Support teacher concerning the pupil’s performance. Once these pupils have been catered for, pupils below the 24th percentile are then prioritised and after that the remaining pupils will be catered for.
	* Parental consent is sought for the conducting of diagnostic assessment. The tests in use are NRIT and are administered by the Learning Support Teacher. A further consultative meeting then takes place to consider the outcomes of the assessment.
2. Provision of Supplementary Teaching
	* The primary work of the Learning Support Teacher is the provision of supplementary teaching to the pupils identified in section 3 above.
	* The class teacher and the Learning Support Teacher meet to devise Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and/or Group Education Plans (GEPs), in consultation with the Principal and parents. The pupils involved also contribute to setting their own short-term targets.
	* Such plans address the pupils’ full range of needs and include:
		+ - details from the pupils’ class teachers;
			- assessment results;
			- other relevant information e.g. reports from other agencies;
			- learning strengths and attainments;
			- priority learning needs;
			- learning targets;
			- class-based learning activities;
			- supplementary support activities; and
			- home support activities.
* Each plan is monitored through teacher observation, the keeping of planning and progress records and through children’s own checklists.
* A detailed review takes place at the end of each instructional term. The Learning Support Teacher and/or the class teacher meet the parents to discuss their child’s progress in the light of the review.
* The Learning Support Teacher maintains the following documentation in individualised files:
	+ - * individual profile and learning programme;
			* short-term planning and programme record;
			* other records e.g. tape recordings of oral work;
			* samples of written work; and
			* reading analysis running records.
* A system of withdrawal and/or in-class support operates in response to the needs of the individual pupil.
1. Procedures for Continuing/Discontinuing Pupils
* Following the end of instructional term review as detailed in section 4 above, a decision is made to continue/discontinue the provision of supplementary teaching.
* The criteria on which this decision is based include:
	+ - * has the pupil achieved some/all of the learning targets set?
			* will the pupil be able to cope independently/semi-independently in the classroom learning context?
* The decision-making process involves consultation between the class teacher, the Learning Support Teacher and the pupil’s parents and account is also taken of the overall Learning Support demands in the school.
* A decision to continue the provision of supplementary teaching will result in a revision of the pupil’s IEP.
1. Communication Strategies

The operation of an effective communication system between all the parties involved in meeting the learning needs of the child is considered essential. The various strands of this system include:

* class teacher and Learning Support Teacher following a low score on a screening test;
* Principal and/or Learning Support Teacher and/or class teacher and parents following a low score on a screening test, including the seeking of approval for diagnostic assessment and provision of supplementary teaching; and
* ongoing communication between the Learning Support Teacher and the class teacher throughout the instructional term.
1. Parental Involvement
* Regular communication takes place between the Learning Support Teacher and parents.
* Specific support is available to parents to assist them to work effectively with their child. This support is available from the Class Teacher and Learning Support Teacher.
* Parents are actively involved in the achievement of the targets set for their child e.g. through shared reading.
* The parents and Learning Support Teacher meet at the end of each instructional term (end of January and end of May) to review the child’s progress.
1. Referral to Out-of-School Agencies
* The Class Teacher co-ordinates the referral of pupils to outside agencies e.g. Educational Psychologist.
* The Principal and/or Learning Support Teacher and/or class teacher meet with the parents to discuss the need for the referral and to seek consent.
* The class teacher completes the necessary referral form in consultation with the appropriate school personnel.
* The external professional visits the school to meet with the pupil, parents, Principal, class teacher and Learning Support Teacher (as appropriate) and the assessment is conducted.
* This is followed by a return visit at which findings are discussed, recommendations are considered and an appropriate response is agreed.
* Where concern arises regarding the manner or speed of the follow-through post assessment, such concern is pursued by the Principal with the out-of-school agency concerned.

9. Provision of Resources

* Resources for the provision of Learning Support include a variety of PM Readers, textbooks, library books and ancillary materials and oral language programmes e.g. Chatterbox. A variety of testing materials are also in use which include standardised, diagnostic, screening, non-reading intelligence, reading experience, reading attainment phonological awareness and Maths attainment.
* Following consultation between the Learning Support Teacher, Principal and class teachers, funding for materials may be provided from funding that may be available through the Board of Management and/or Parents’ Association.
* Learning Support resources will primarily be used in the Learning Support unit. These resources may be made available to class teachers following consultation with the Learning Support Teacher.
1. Timetabling
* The provision of Learning Support is in provided during regular class teaching in English and Maths as in class support.
* Effort is made to ensure that pupils who need to be withdrawn do not miss out on the same curricular area each time they attend learning support. A flexible approach to timetabling is adopted by class teachers while class disruption is minimised.
* The provision of learning support includes withdrawal of pupils from their classroom where needed and in-class tuition.
1. Learning Support Teacher’s Work Schedule
* The work schedule of the Learning Support Teacher, in addition to providing supplementary teaching, may include the overseeing of early intervention and prevention programmes, the conducting of diagnostic assessment, the maintenance and review of pupil records, the co-ordination of special needs services and consultation with teachers and parents.
* In recognition of this varied role, the caseload of the Learning Support Teacher will be regularly reviewed.

# Success Criteria

The school-wide implementation of this policy will result in enhancement of pupil learning in the following ways:

* improved standards of academic achievement within the pupil’s individual learning programme;
* enabling of the discontinuation of the provision of Learning Support based on positive assessment results;
* enhanced parental involvement in supporting their child’s learning needs; and
* increased opportunities for effective communication between school personnel in relation to pupils’ progress.

The achievement of these success criteria will be assessed through feedback from teachers, pupils and parents.

# Roles and Responsibilities

The implementation of our policy will be supported as follows:

## Roles Person(s) Responsible

Co-ordinate Learning Support and Principal

Special Needs services

Provide supplementary teaching, Learning Support Teacher

conduct diagnostic assessment,

maintain and review pupil records,

and liaise with Principal, teachers and parents

First line responsibility for the pupil’s Class Teacher

learning needs

Support for and participation in their Parent

child’s learning

Development, implementation and Pupil

review of their own learning

Oversee implementation and review of the Board of Management

Learning Support policy and the provision of

Adequate resources, accommodation and storage

**Implementation and Review**

The implementation of this policy will commence in September 2013. It is intended that it will be implemented in full during this school year. The policy will be reviewed in June 2016 and at the end of every third school year thereafter.

**Ratification and Communication**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Redwood NS at its meeting on 16th May 2013. Parents may obtain a copy of this policy from the Parents’ Association or it may be viewed at the school on appointment with the Principal.