



## **Special Educational Needs Policy**

### **Mission Statement:**

Gonzaga College is a Jesuit school; a Catholic educational community working to establish gospel values as the cornerstone of our local, national, and international society.

We strive to form men of competence, conscience, courage, and compassion; men of integrity, whose faith affirms the uniqueness and dignity of each individual, demands a generous commitment to service, and seeks to bring about a world where justice is the birthright of all.

Holistic development of the individual student, based on the pursuit of excellence in his academic, cultural, physical, social, and spiritual growth, is at the core of our mission.

The motto of our school is *Semper et Ubique Fidelis: Always and Everywhere Faithful.*

### **Special Educational Needs Policy**

Gonzaga College's SEN policy has been coordinated by the special educational needs team, in consultation with senior management. This policy document aims to outline the form that additional educational support for students with special and/or additional educational needs (SEN/AEN) take in the College and the philosophy which underpins it. It is written in the context of The Education Act (1998) and takes cognisance of The Equal Status Act (2000), The Equality Act (2004), The Education Welfare Act (2000), The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003) and The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004). Four further publications have informed the content of this policy- "Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs-Post Primary Guidelines" (Department of Education & Science (DES) Inspectorate: 2007), "Exceptionally Able Students-Draft Guidelines for Teachers" (NCCA: 2007), "Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools", "Guidelines for Post Primary Schools-Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools" (DES: 2017). The policy is a revised and amended policy in accordance with Circular No 0014/2017.

The document should be read in conjunction with the following college policies: (1) Admissions, (2) Anti-Bullying (3) Guidance and Counselling Policy (4) Health and Safety (5) Child Protection (6) Pastoral Care (7) School Improvement Plan.

Two insights are central to understanding Jesuit Education: The first is 'cura personalis' (care for the person); the second is that God, the creator, who knows all knowable and loves all lovable, is to be found in all things and so any search for either truth or love is a search for God, and any every experience of truth and love is an experience of God.

For Ignatius Loyola, the relationship between the educator and the student is akin to the relationship between the retreat director and the one undertaking the retreat during the Spiritual Exercises.

In Jesuit Education, therefore, the young person is at the centre of the operation; the educator is an enabler rather than an instructor. The educator's job is:



- to assist the young person in discovering, recognizing, and valuing, his or her unique set of talents;
- to encourage the young person to develop his or her talents in a balanced and holistic way;
- to offer the young person the experience of community as the locus in which his or her talents can be validated;
- to challenge the young person to form, and make a personal commitment to, a consistent and comprehensive system of values;
- to introduce the young person to, and invite him or her to participation in, a rich and nourishing spiritual life.

Jesuit Education achieves its ends by encouraging:

- reflection on experience;
- learning from that reflection;
- action based on that learning.

Jesuit Education places critical thinking at the heart of the educational project, encouraging a rigorous approach to the evaluation and clear expression of ideas and values.

### **Rationale:**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide practical guidance to staff, parents and other interested parties about our SEN procedures and practices.
- outline the framework for addressing additional needs in our school.
- comply with legislation-The Education Act (1998) and takes cognisance of The Equal Status Act (2000), The Equality Act (2004), The Education Welfare Act (2000), The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003) and The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004).
- fulfil DES circular 0014/17 - Circular to the Management Authorities of all Mainstream Post Primary Schools; Special Education Teaching Allocation and new 2 2017 Guidelines for Post Primary Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools.
- adheres to the information outlined in the following publications- “Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs-Post Primary Guidelines “(Department of Education & Science (DES) Inspectorate: 2007), “Exceptionally Able Students-Draft Guidelines for Teachers” (NCCA: 2007) and “Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools”.

Within the context of The Education Act of 1998; The Equal Status Act of 2000; The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004; the Admissions Act 2018; DES regulations, the rights of the Patron and the resources available, the College supports the principles of inclusion, parental choice and equality of access and participation in the school.

Section 9 of the Education Act of 1998 states that: “A recognised school shall provide education to students which is appropriate to their abilities and needs... It shall as far as resources permit:

- ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with special needs, are identified and provided for.
- establish and maintain an admissions’ policy which provides for maximum accessibility



While recognising the rights of the parent to send their child to the school of their choice, the Board of Management of Gonzaga College SJ is also responsible for respecting the rights of the existing College community and in particular, the students already enrolled. This requires balanced judgements, which are guided by the principles of natural justice and acting in the best interests of **all the** students.

### **Aims of the Policy:**

This policy aims to outline procedures and practices of how the College:

- identifies additional needs that our students may have
- allocates resources to effectively meet the needs of students with additional needs
- divides the roles and responsibilities among our college community in relation to students with additional needs
- tracks, monitors, reviews and reports progress of students with additional needs
- communicate information between the SEN team, Headmaster, staff, parents / guardians and students

The College does not currently employ a full-time teacher to work with students in need of special educational support and learning support.

### **Categories of Special Education Needs (SEN):**

To date, the school has provided for the following categories of students with AEN:

- Borderline/Mild General Learning Disability
- Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)
- Specific Learning Difficulty – Dyslexia
- Physical Disabilities- Dyspraxia, Cerebral Palsy
- Sensory Difficulties (Hearing and Visual Impairments)
- Moderate Learning Disability
- Autism/ Autistic Spectrum Disorder (e.g.: Asperger's Syndrome)
- Gifted and Talented students
- EAL (English as an Additional Language)

In addition to these categories, we understand that under circular 08/02 (Appendix 3) the following categories of SEN exist also:

- Down's Syndrome
- Moderate General Learning Disability
- Severe / Profound General Learning Disability

### **Access to Special Education:**

The following students may be selected for Special Education learning support in the College:

- A student who has had a psychological assessment which recommends Special Education teaching.



- A student who has a Specific Learning Difficulty or a Mild Learning Difficulty
- A student who received Special Education support in Primary School.
- A student identified from Primary Sten Scores.
- A student identified from CAT 4 Scores.
- A student identified by their teachers as having difficulty with one or more of their subjects (Referral System).
- A student with emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- A student from a minority background (EAL; Cultural).
- A student with physical difficulties.
- A student with a visual / hearing impairment.
- Exceptionally able students

### **Aims and Objectives of the Policy**

As an inclusive school, Gonzaga aims to remove the barriers to learning and participation that can hinder or exclude students or groups of students. The Secondary Curriculum is our starting point for planning a curriculum that meets the specific needs of students. We aim to meet those needs by:

- setting suitable learning challenges
- responding to students' diverse learning needs
- helping students to overcome potential barriers to learning and assessment
- providing other curriculum opportunities outside the Secondary Curriculum to meet the needs of individuals and groups.
- In our quest to achieve education inclusion we continually review our practice, in asking the key questions:
  - Are we supporting all students in their efforts to achieve their potential?
  - Are there differences in the achievement of different groups of students?
  - Are our interventions effective?
  - Are we successful in promoting a culture of inclusion and preparing our students to live in a diverse and multicultural society?

### **Allocation of Hours**

The NCSE has allocated approx. 40 hours of Special Education Teaching Support to Gonzaga College for the academic year 2022/2023

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the SEN Team**

The SEN team comprises the Headmaster, Deputy Principal, SEN Co-ordinator and the Guidance Counsellor. The SEN Co-ordinator also works closely with Year Heads and mainstream teachers when the need arises. The team is advised by the NEPS psychologist, SENO as well as other agencies and professionals involved with SEN students in the school. Under the EPSEN Act, 2004, the Headmaster has overall responsibility to ensure that the special educational needs of students are met. In order to meet these needs, the Headmaster is obliged to establish and promote whole-school policies which support the learning of all students, including those with special educational needs



The following are the roles of the different partners involved in the provision of SEN in Gonzaga College SJ. (Inclusion of Students with SEN Post-Primary Guidelines 2007 and Circular 14/2017: General Allocation Model).

### **The Board of Management**

- To ensure that all students with SEN are identified and assessed.
- To ensure that the school has an up to date SEN policy in place and monitor the implementation of that policy.
- To ensure that a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum is provided to ensure that students learn the skills necessary to participate in society.
- To ensure the development of positive partnerships with parents and other relevant agencies, and to ensure that parents are informed of their child's SEN and how these needs are being met within Gonzaga College.
- To ensure that parents are consulted with in regard to and invited to participate in the making of all significant decisions concerning their child's education.
- To develop a whole school approach to literacy and numeracy under Section 14 of EPSEN.

### **The Headmaster**

- To appoint an SEN co-ordinator and to work closely with the co-ordinator.
- To inform the Board of Management of issues with SEN.
- To consult with the SEN Co-ordinator and other personnel who liaise with the Department of Education regarding needs and provisions.
- To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources, including the allocation of resource hours and relevant funds.
- To establish a "Special Needs Support Team" in the school to ensure identification of needs and support for students with SEN.
- To promote a whole school approach to special educational needs, make all staff aware of their responsibilities in this area and to facilitate appropriate staff development in this area.
- To promote the development of positive partnerships with parents of SEN students.
- To ensure that procedures exist for consultation with primary schools with regard to the enrolment of students with SEN.
- To process applications for Irish Exemptions.
- To provide leadership in developing relevant whole school policies: enrolment/assessment/inclusion.
- To manage the implementation of policies and practices.
- To direct the work of the SNAs.

### **The SEN Co-ordinator**

- To co-ordinate/devise a school SEN plan.
- To create and maintain a school register of students with SEN.
- To communicate the needs of students to teachers.
- To assist in the identification of students with SEN.



- To ensure that support plans are updated and in place for students with SEN.
- To advise teachers of the recommendations made in professional assessments relating to individual students.
- To assist the Headmaster in the allocation of resources.
- To process applications for Reasonable Accommodations at State Exams (RACE).
- To provide RACE in house exam where possible given the resources available.
- To liaise with outside professionals.
- To meet with parents in order to plan and to review interventions.
- To assist in co-ordinating the administration of standardised assessments.
- To ensure that systems are in place for the referral of students by teachers, parents, etc.
- To advise and collaborate with SNAs around the care needs of relevant students.
- To facilitate regular meetings of the SEN team.

### **The Classroom Teacher**

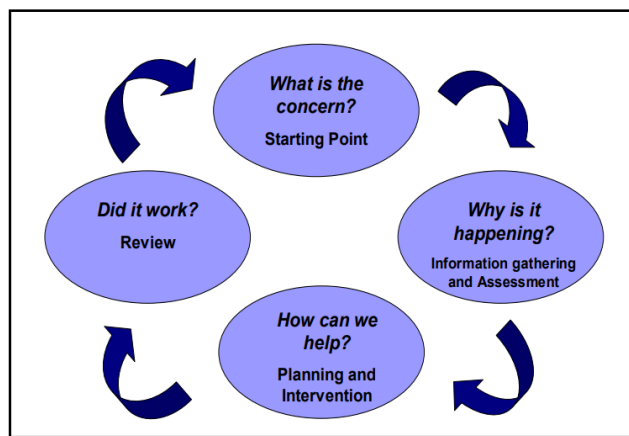
The classroom teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all learners in their classroom, including learners with identified special educational needs. It is the responsibility of the class/subject teacher to ensure that each pupil is taught in a stimulating and supportive classroom environment where all pupils feel equal and valued ( DES, 2017b, p17 )

- To be aware of the School SEN policy and procedures (as outlined in this policy) for dealing with students with SEN, and ensure all students' needs are met.
- To seek advice from the SEN Team regarding students with SEN.
- To participate in CPD in the area of SEN.
- To support/encourage independence in the student.
- To differentiate teaching and learning activities for students, including exceptionally able/gifted students.
- To create a positive classroom environment for all students.
- To create opportunities for success.
- To use assessment for learning.
- To establish and teach behavioural and learning expectations.
- To assess/monitor progress.
- To consider the needs of students with SEN in all aspects of classroom planning.
- To identify students who may be at risk (considering general progress, application, communication, behaviour, or interaction with other students).
- To complete referral forms, transfer of information forms, etc. in a timely manner as required by the SEN team.
- To contribute to group or individual planning and review.
- To implement agreed strategies.
- To implement individualised and specialist programmes and strategies.
- To direct the work of the SNA's in the classroom.
- To inform parents of the progress of students through Parent-Teacher Meetings and school reports

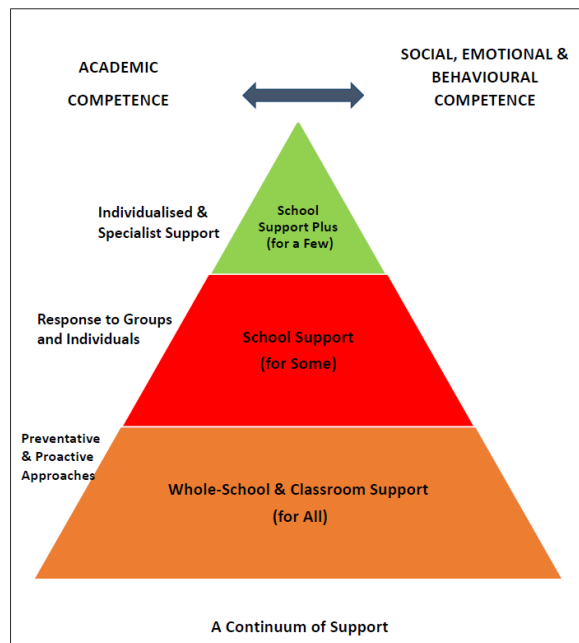


**Continuum of Support:**

Gonzaga College uses the Continuum of Support Framework set out by the Department of Education to identify and support students with additional needs. Like this framework, the College recognises that special educational needs occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and from transient to long-term and that students require different levels of support depending on their identified additional needs. By using this framework, it helps us implement a staged approach to ensure that our support and interventions are incremental, moving from class-based interventions to more intensive and individualised support, and are informed by careful monitoring of progress. 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 students. This problem-solving process is illustrated as follows:



Identification of educational needs is central to our policy and the new allocation model. By using the Continuum of Support identify students' include academic, social well as needs associated language and difficulties. This, in turn, respond to needs in a engaging with external The Continuum of following levels of



framework, we can educational needs, to and emotional needs, as with physical, sensory, communication allows us to identify and flexible way while agencies as required. Support suggests the support:



## **Procedures for dealing with Students who have additional educational needs**

The College will endeavour to provide for students with special educational needs and support such facilities as resources allow in order for them to realise their potential. In planning the allocation of additional teaching supports, the over-riding principle is that resources are deployed to address the identified needs of students. Importantly, those with the highest level of need should have access to the greatest level of support. The SEN Team considers methodologies best suited to promoting meaningful inclusion such as differentiation, team-teaching and small group teaching. In addition to literacy and numeracy difficulties, many students will have specific needs in such areas as oral language, social interaction, behaviour, emotional development, motor skills and application to learning. Early intervention is critical to establishing a good foundation for learning

In order to support the reporting and transfer of pupil information from primary to post primary schools, Parents of incoming pupils are required to forward the 'Education Passport' detailed below following confirmation of enrolment, ideally by the end of June (Circular 45/2014). The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has developed a suite of materials to support this transfer these include

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

In accordance with the College's Admission Policy we would also ask that Parents furnish the College with details of;

1. academic progress to date (school reports)
2. any learning difficulties
3. any medical condition
4. any disabilities
5. any special educational needs
6. any psychological/educational assessment carried out
7. any Individual Educational Programme produced in a previous school
8. any other relevant documentation Parents may deem helpful to make the transition to a new school successful.

It should be noted that the College is in the process of adopting the principles and practices of the NEPS Continuum of Support.( figure 2 ) This includes a graduated solution orientated framework of assessment and intervention which comprises the distinct processes of Support for All, School Support for Some, and School Support Plus (for a few).





### **Whole School & Classroom Support:**

The Class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in his/her classroom, including student with special educational needs. They should:

- Implement teaching programmes which optimise the learning of all students and, to the greatest extent possible, prevent the emergence of learning difficulties
- Create a positive learning environment that accommodates and takes cognisance of learning difficulties
- Familiarise themselves with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to cater for particular learning styles and to meet a variety of need
- Differentiate teaching strategies, approaches and expectations to the range of experiences, abilities, needs and learning styles in their class
- Discuss outcomes of standardised testing with Year Head, Guidance Counsellor and/or SENCo to assist in the selection of students for Special Education
- Communicate with parents regarding concerns about their child and update them regarding their progress through the use of the College journal.
- Gather information and assess students presenting with needs to inform teaching and learning using the Continuum of Support
- Develop classroom support plans for students in receipt of Classroom Support.

### **Organisation of Class Groups:**

Junior Cycle classes are all mixed ability.

Transition Year is mixed ability.

Senior Cycle operates a mixture of streaming ( Maths and Irish ) and mixed ability.

### **Organisation of Learning Support:**

Currently, we have a mixed model of Support in operation:

- Small Group Support
- Individual Support
- Co-teaching

### **Timing of Learning Supports:**

The Learning Support teachers endeavour to minimise loss of teaching time in other subjects. Those pupils in the Junior Cycle who have full timetables (ie no Irish exemption) are withdrawn from Religion.



### **Irish Exemptions:**

Irish exemptions can only be granted when the criteria outlined in the most revised Department Circular 0055/2022 are met. Existing exemptions from the study of Irish granted under the previous circulars and held by students will continue to apply until the end of their post primary education. All students who have an Irish exemption, and who require it will be offered as much support teaching at this time as our resources allow. This may vary from year to year and is needs based.

### **The Gifted and Talented Student:**

Students who require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for the general cohort of students are deemed to be exceptionally able. Students may excel in various areas and the College will do what it can as an inclusive learning community to support them and encourage the development of their special abilities. The exceptionally able student will have access to a broad range of co-curricular activities:

- Maths Olympiad
- AILO
- Ever to Excel
- Science and Applied Maths Competitions
- Essay Writing Competitions
- Debating/ Model United Nations
- Opportunities for artistic performance/ display

### **State Exams and House Exams:**

Application for Reasonable Accommodation for Certificate Examinations (a) RACE:

- Students who have been identified as having specific additional needs may apply for special consideration in the Leaving Certificate and in the Junior Certificate Examinations.
- All applications will be processed through the SENCo with the help of the Special Education Team.
- The Special Educational Needs Coordinator will consult with the Academic Year Heads, parents/guardians of students applying, and the students themselves will be consulted before the application is processed. Written consent to process the application will be supplied by the parents/guardians/guardian. (November for Leaving Cert/ January for Junior Cycle )
- Every effort will be made to ensure that the special considerations to which a student is entitled are secured for him.
- Copies of all applications will be made and kept on file by the Special Educational Needs Coordinator. After the examinations the application shall be put on the student's College file.
- The Guidance Counsellor after consultation with the SENCo and SEN Team will inform students and parents as to when they should/could apply for similar consideration at third level (DARE) and will supply academic references for this purpose.



### **House Exams:**

Students who are deemed likely to fulfil the RACE criteria (use of assistive technology, reader, spelling and grammar waiver) in the State Exam process are provided with the same types of supports in House Exams. This is subject to staff and resource availability. It is not possible to replicate the provisions available for State Examinations due to space and staffing constraints.

### **Student Support File: (IEPs)**

Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) are not yet a legal requirement in Ireland, however we use a Student Support File to plan interventions and to track a student's pathway through the Continuum of Support. This facilitates us in documenting progress and needs over time and assists us in providing an appropriate level of support to students, in line with their level of need. Our Student Support File is based on the NEPS template and is stored on the school server. An up to date Student Support File is required in order to make a RACE application

All support files should include:

- Cover sheet with student's details
- A timeline of actions and intended outcomes
- Record of interventions and support received
- Standardised/ Diagnostic test scores
- School support strategies and recommendations
- Supporting documentation from external agencies

### **SEN Records:**

Individual SEN Files: All students' SEN files are stored in a locked filing cabinet in the SENCo's Office. It is the responsibility of individual Learning Support Teachers to update and manage the files of the students on school support and school support plus that they support on the College server (Compass).

The following information is also stored

- Student Support File
- Psychological Report
- Copy of referrals made to outside agencies
- Copy of reports from outside agencies
- Record of SEN meetings with parents, outside agencies and inter- school meetings
- Record of SEN correspondence between parents, outside agencies and school staff
- Subject specific advice on dealing with individual SEN issues in the classroom.
- Emergency Evacuation plans (EEPs)

The above documents are currently being digitised and uploaded on the College SharePoint ( SEN Team & Learning Support Resources )