



Borrisokane Community College



Special Education Needs (SEN) Policy



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Borrisokane Community College

Mission Statement

We seek to promote a caring and committed school community which will facilitate the education of our students and where each individual is valued as a unique human being.

“Is ar scáth a chéile a mhairimid”

Ethos

This policy is firmly rooted in the ETB core values of **excellence, care, equality, community, and respect**. By prioritising the inclusion and support of all students, particularly those with special educational needs, the policy ensures that every student can achieve their full potential. It fosters a caring and respectful environment where diversity is celebrated, and equality is promoted. Through collaborative efforts and community engagement, the policy reflects our commitment to creating a supportive and inclusive educational setting for all.

Inclusion

Borrisokane Community College makes provision for the inclusion of all students, including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The following areas are covered in the school plan, which is updated annually:

- School admission policy
- School attendance strategy
- Promotion of ETB Ethos - Core Values
- Procedures for arranging the transfer of students from primary schools, other post-primary schools, and to third-level institutions and the world of work.
- The School Assessment Policy
- The School Assistive Technology Policy

Inclusion refers not only to students with SEN but also to embracing all students with learning differences, such as those from the Traveller community, those living in areas of social or economic deprivation, and those from other cultures whose first language may not be English or Irish. Inclusion implies the right to appropriate education and aims to enable all students to fully belong to the school community.

SEN Plan

The SEN team has drawn up a SEN plan detailing the roles and responsibilities of staff, parents, outside agencies, and the Board of Management regarding students with special educational needs. It outlines different categories of SEN and strategies for differentiating teaching for these students.

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal:

- Prepare an annual report to the Board of Management on the use of SET resources, using the template provided in Circular 64/2024.
- Ensure SET resources are deployed correctly to support students with identified learning needs. [Special Education Teachers \(SET\)](#):
- Provide direct support to students with SEN through individual, small group, and team-teaching interventions.
- Collaborate with mainstream teachers to differentiate the curriculum and provide additional teaching support.
- Engage in provision mapping to identify and evaluate supports for students across the Continuum of Support.

Mainstream Teachers:

- Educate all students in their class, including those with SEN.
- Gather information through formal and informal means to inform interventions.
- Collaborate with SET teachers, parents, and external professionals to develop individualized support plans.

Special Needs Assistants

- **Individualised Assistance:** SNAs work closely with teachers and educational professionals to provide personalized support to students with SEN.
- **Access to Curriculum:** They ensure students can access the curriculum and participate fully in school activities.
- **Personal Care Needs:** SNAs assist with personal care needs, facilitating communication, and promoting social integration.
- **Safe Learning Environment:** They help create a safe and supportive learning environment by managing behaviour and providing emotional support.
- **Overall Well-being:** Through their dedicated efforts, SNAs contribute significantly to the overall well-being and academic progress of students with SEN.

Parents/Guardians:

- Provide information on special learning needs during enrolment.
- Participate in the planning process for their child's educational support.

Board of Management:

- Oversee the implementation of the SEN policy and ensure it aligns with Circular 64/2024 and SET allocation guidelines.

Transition from Primary to Secondary

Early identification of students with special educational needs is crucial. The following procedures will take place prior to students commencing at Borrisokane Community College:

- Parents provide information on special learning needs during enrolment.
- Information on all students is requested from their previous school.
- Psychological reports and other relevant professional reports are reviewed to allocate support under the new allocation model.

Identification and Support

Borrisokane Community College follows NEPS guidelines for the Continuum of Support:

- **Stage 1:** Support for ALL/Classroom support through prevention, effective mainstream teaching, and early identification through screening (see assessment policy).
- **Stage 2:** School Support for Some through assessment and intervention for students requiring additional input.
- **Stage 3:** School Support Plus for a Few through intensive and individualised supports for students with complex needs.

Educational Planning

Educational planning is essential for meeting students' needs. A student's educational support plan should include clear, measurable learning targets and specify the resources and interventions used to address student needs. The planning process involves information gathering from formal and informal testing (see assessment policy), educational passports, relevant reports along with collaboration with teachers, parents, students, and external professionals, with regular reviews of learning targets.

Reasonable Accommodations for the Certificate Exams

The goal of RACE is to remove barriers that may impact a student's performance due to their disability, ensuring a fair and equitable examination process without giving an unfair advantage. Following "Reasonable Accommodations for Schools Guidelines" published annually by the State Exams Commission, applications for RACE accommodations are made through the school (in third year and can be reactivated in sixth year), to the State Exams Commission. Only students who meet the criteria in the guidelines may apply. Applications for additional/new RACET can also be made in sixth year.

Curricular Inclusion

It is the policy of Borrisokane Community College to include all students in mainstream classes where appropriate. Additional teaching support is provided through team teaching, in-class support, small group teaching, and individual instruction. Students who fall within the gifted and talented range are acknowledged. The school will follow the NCCA guidelines in supporting these students.

Irish Exemptions

In line with Circular 0055/2022 parents of students who meet the criteria for an Irish Exemption must complete an application form and apply to the School Principal for the Irish Exemption.

Autism Special Classes

Borrisokane Community College offers specialized classes for students with Autism who meet the criteria for a special class (see enrolment policy). These classes provide a structured and supportive environment tailored to the unique needs of students with autism. The curriculum is individualized to address specific learning goals, social skills development, and sensory needs. Collaboration with parents, mainstream teachers, and external professionals is essential to ensure a holistic approach to education. Students in autism classes are integrated into mainstream activities where appropriate, promoting inclusion and social interaction. A review of Autism class places will take place annually or as needed.

English as an Additional Language

Borrisokane Community College is committed to providing comprehensive support for students with English as an Additional Language (EAL). Recognising the unique challenges faced by EAL students, the school implements targeted strategies to ensure their full inclusion and academic success. These strategies include differentiated instruction, additional language support classes, and the use of visual aids and bilingual resources. Special Education Teachers (SET) collaborate with mainstream teachers to adapt the curriculum and provide individualized support plans that address both language acquisition and subject-specific learning needs. The school also engages with parents and

guardians to foster a supportive home environment and encourages the use of students' first languages to enhance cognitive development. Regular assessments and reviews are conducted to monitor progress and adjust support as needed, ensuring that EAL students can fully participate in the school community and achieve their educational goals.

Self-Evaluation

The SEN team continuously reviews initiatives and sets targets for improvement. This process involves informal discussions and formal team meetings. As part of this self-evaluation, the school engages in provision mapping for inclusive special education across the NEPS continuum of support, as promoted by ETBI. Provision mapping which allows the school to identify, list, and evaluate the evidence-informed provisions and supports in place for students, ensuring a comprehensive and effective approach to meeting their needs.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it aligns with current guidelines and best practices.

Reviewed April 2025 by SET core team and Staff of BCC.

Copilot review of new policy to check it aligns with circular and guidelines also completed.

Appendix 1

Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations Policy

Borrisokane Community College

1. Policy Statement

This policy outlines our school's approach to understanding, preventing, and responding to behaviours of concern and crisis situations. It aims to promote a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment where all students can learn and thrive.

Our school is committed to:

- Promoting positive behaviour through respect, empathy, and restorative practices.
- Understanding the underlying causes of behaviour rather than focusing solely on outcomes.
- Responding to crisis situations in a calm, safe, and proportionate manner.
- Protecting the wellbeing and dignity of all students and staff.

This policy aligns with the *Code of Behaviour* (NEWB, 2008), the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (DES, 2018), *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017)*, and the *Health and Safety Act (2005)*.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All students enrolled in the school.
- All staff (teaching and non-teaching).
- Visitors, volunteers, and external facilitators engaging with students.

3. Definitions

Behaviour of Concern:

Any behaviour that may cause physical or emotional harm to the student or others, interfere with learning, or significantly disrupt the school environment. Examples include verbal aggression, physical aggression, self-injury, or severe withdrawal.

Crisis Situation:

A situation where the safety or wellbeing of a student or others is at immediate risk and urgent action is required to prevent harm.

4. Understanding Behaviour

The school recognises that:

- Behaviour is a form of communication and may reflect unmet needs, distress, or environmental triggers.
- Factors influencing behaviour may include emotional, social, sensory, cognitive, or mental health needs.
- Staff should seek to understand the *function* of behaviour (what the student is trying to achieve or avoid).

Supportive strategies include:

- Consistent routines and clear expectations.
- Building positive relationships and a sense of belonging.
- Differentiated learning and emotional supports.
- Regular communication with parents/guardians.
- Collaboration with NEPS, SEN teams, and external agencies where needed.

5. Prevention and Early Intervention

Preventive measures include:

- **Positive Behaviour Frameworks:** Use of restorative practices, PBIS (Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports), or school-specific behaviour codes.
- **Staff Training:** Ongoing CPD on behaviour support, de-escalation, and trauma-informed practice.
- **Individual Support Plans:** For students with identified needs, including Behaviour Support Plans or Individual Education Plans (IEPs).
- **Environment Review:** Ensuring classrooms and communal areas are structured and predictable to reduce anxiety or sensory overload.

6. Responding to Crisis Situations

When a behaviour escalates into a crisis:

a. De-escalation Techniques

- Remain calm and adopt a non-threatening posture.
- Use a low, slow voice and minimal verbal commands.

- Remove potential triggers or reduce audience size.
- Offer space, time, and reassurance.

b. Protective Interventions

- Physical intervention or restraint is a *last resort* and may only be used to prevent immediate risk of harm.
- Any such intervention must be *reasonable, proportionate, and necessary*.
- It should be carried out only by staff trained in an approved crisis intervention method (e.g., MAPA, CPI, or equivalent).
- Every incident involving physical intervention must be recorded and reported to the Principal and parents/guardians.

c. Immediate Follow-Up

- Ensure safety of all involved.
- Provide emotional support to students and staff.
- Debrief the incident promptly and factually.

7. Post-Crisis Review

Following a crisis incident:

- Conduct a **debrief meeting** with staff and the student (where appropriate) to review what occurred and identify triggers.
- Update or develop a **Behaviour Support Plan**.
- Engage **parent(s)/guardian(s)** in follow-up discussions.
- Refer to relevant supports (e.g., NEPS psychologist, SEN team, counsellor).
- Record the incident in accordance with school policy and GDPR requirements.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management:

- Ratifies the policy and ensures legal compliance.
- Reviews incidents and reports as part of school oversight.

Principal/Deputy Principal:

- Leads implementation and ensures staff training.

- Oversees incident review and reporting processes.

Teachers/SNAs:

- Apply de-escalation strategies.
- Contribute to support planning and documentation.
- Communicate regularly with parents and the SEN team.

Parents/Guardians:

- Support agreed strategies and open communication.

Students:

- Engage in restorative discussions and reflect on choices with support.

9. Training and Support

Staff will have access to:

- Behaviour management and de-escalation training.
- Workshops on trauma-informed and neurodiversity-inclusive practice.
- Ongoing guidance from the school's SEN Coordinator and NEPS psychologist

10. Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be reviewed every two years or following a serious incident.
- Feedback will be sought from staff, students, and parents.
- Updates will reflect evolving best practice and Department of Education guidance.

Appendix 2

Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations Policy

ASD Special Class – Borrisokane Community College

1. Policy Statement

This policy outlines how our school community understands, prevents, and responds to **behaviours of concern** and **crisis situations** within the ASD Special Class.

We recognise that all behaviour is a form of communication and that students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may express distress, anxiety, or unmet needs through behaviours that challenge.

Our goal is to provide a **safe, structured, and supportive learning environment** that fosters emotional regulation, independence, and wellbeing for every student.

This policy aligns with:

- *Department of Education Circulars* and guidance on ASD provision.
- *NEWB Code of Behaviour (2008)*.
- *Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice (DES, 2018)*.
- *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)*.
- *Health and Safety Authority Act (2005)*.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Students enrolled in the school's ASD class.
- Teachers, SNAs, and all school staff supporting these students.
- Visiting professionals and external agency staff (e.g., NEPS, HSE, occupational therapists).
- Parents/guardians and any person acting in loco parentis.

3. Definitions

Behaviour of Concern:

Any behaviour that presents a risk to the student's safety or wellbeing, the safety of others, or significantly disrupts learning. This may include:

- Physical aggression or self-injury

- Absconding or attempts to leave a safe area
- Severe emotional distress (meltdowns)
- Destruction of property

Crisis Situation:

A situation where a student’s behaviour escalates to a level that places themselves or others at immediate risk and requires urgent, coordinated intervention.

4. Understanding Behaviour in the ASD Context

The school recognises that:

- Behaviour often communicates unmet needs, sensory overload, anxiety, confusion, or pain.
- Students with ASD may have difficulty identifying or verbalising emotions.
- Environmental factors—noise, lighting, transitions, or unexpected changes - can trigger distress.
- Predictable routines, clear expectations, and visual supports promote regulation and security.

Our approach focuses on **understanding the reason behind the behaviour** rather than managing the behaviour in isolation.

5. Prevention and Early Intervention

Proactive supports include:

a. Individualised Planning

- Development of **Student Support Files** and **Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs)** informed by observations, data tracking, and multidisciplinary input.
- Incorporation of **sensory diets, communication supports** (PECS, Lámh, AAC), and **visual schedules**.
- Consistent routines and clear transition cues.

b. Positive Behaviour Strategies

- Reinforcement of positive and regulated behaviours through praise, tokens, or individual reward systems.
- Restorative and reflective conversations at the student’s level of understanding.
- Opportunities for self-regulation (e.g., sensory room, calm space).

c. Staff Training and Collaboration

- All staff working in the ASD class will receive ongoing training in autism-specific methodologies, such as TEACCH, PECS, Zones of Regulation, and de-escalation techniques (e.g., MAPA or CPI).
- Regular team meetings will review individual needs and strategies.

6. Responding to Crisis Situations

When a situation escalates and presents a risk of harm, staff will respond using calm, safe, and consistent procedures.

a. De-escalation Approaches

- Maintain a calm, neutral tone and minimal language.
- Reduce demands and remove unnecessary stimuli.
- Offer space or access to a calm area.
- Use pre-agreed calming strategies (e.g., deep pressure, sensory tools, preferred music).
- Provide visual cues or short, clear prompts.

b. Protective Interventions

- Physical intervention or restraint is a *last resort* and may be used only where there is an **immediate risk of injury** to the student or others.
- Interventions must be **reasonable, proportionate, and necessary**, and carried out only by staff trained in an approved method (MAPA/CPI).
- Use of physical intervention must be documented immediately and reviewed by the ASD class teacher and Principal/Deputy Principal.
- Parents/guardians will be informed as soon as possible.

c. Ensuring Safety

- Remove other students if required.
- Ensure supervision ratios remain appropriate.
- Staff should prioritise their own and students' physical safety at all times.

7. Post-Crisis Recovery and Review

Following a crisis:

1. **Ensure emotional safety:** Give the student time and space to recover before discussion.

2. **Debrief:** Staff involved will meet to review what happened, identify triggers, and consider environmental or communication factors.
3. **Student reflection:** When appropriate, help the student understand what happened using visual supports or social stories.
4. **Parental communication:** Parents/guardians will be contacted to discuss the incident and ongoing supports.
5. **Documentation:** All incidents will be logged on the school's behaviour tracking system and stored securely in line with GDPR.
6. **Review of Supports:** Update BSP or sensory strategies as needed.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management:

- Ensures this policy is implemented and reviewed regularly.
- Supports staff training and safety measures.

Principal/Deputy Principal:

- Oversees implementation and ensures incident reporting and parental communication.
- Supports staff wellbeing post-incident.

ASD Class Teacher:

- Leads development of individual BSPs and reviews incidents with staff.
- Coordinates communication with parents and multidisciplinary teams.

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs):

- Implement support plans and contribute observations.
- Use de-escalation and sensory regulation strategies consistently.

Parents/Guardians:

- Collaborate on support plans and share relevant information.
- Reinforce agreed strategies at home where possible.

Students:

- Supported to express needs and develop self-regulation strategies at their level of understanding.

9. Training and Professional Development

All staff working in the ASD class will receive:

- Regular CPD in autism education, communication supports, and sensory integration.
- Crisis management training (e.g., MAPA, CPI, or equivalent).
- Ongoing consultation with NEPS, SENCO, and external therapists.

10. Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be reviewed every two years or following a serious incident.
- Feedback from staff, parents, and professionals will inform revisions.
- The Board of Management will ratify updates and ensure compliance with current DES guidelines.

Appendix 3

Borrisokane Community College

Intimate Care Policy

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the agreed principles and procedures for providing intimate care to students in the school. “Intimate care” refers to care tasks associated with bodily functions, personal hygiene, toileting, dressing/undressing, and other procedures which involve direct or indirect contact with intimate parts of the body.

The school recognises that all students have the right to dignity, privacy and safety when receiving intimate care. At the same time, staff involved in providing intimate care must operate within a framework which protects them and the student. The policy is in keeping with relevant national guidance (such as Children First Act 2015, the national child safeguarding guidance, and the requirements for safe care of students with additional needs).

2. Rationale

- To safeguard the rights of students who require intimate care and to respect their dignity and privacy.
- To provide clear guidance for staff, parents/guardians and students about how intimate care will be delivered.
- To ensure consistency of approach and good practice across the school.
- To minimise risk of misunderstanding or allegation and to ensure that staff operate in a safe and professional manner.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all students in the school who require assistance with intimate care tasks, including students with special educational needs, physical disabilities, medical needs, or other care needs. It also applies to staff, parents/guardians and any external persons involved in such care.

4. General Principles

- The dignity and privacy of the student is paramount.

- Wherever possible, the student will be consulted about their care and encouraged to act as independently as possible.
- Staff will always work in a way that promotes the student's rights, choice, and self-esteem.
- Any intimate care task will consider the developmental stage of the student.
- The same staff will be assigned to support students needing intimate care when feasible; changes will be communicated.
- Where feasible, students will be offered a carer of the same gender; if not possible, this will be explained sensitively.
- All staff are expected to abide by the school's child safeguarding and protection policies and procedures.
- Appropriate training will be provided to staff engaged in intimate care.
- Records will be kept of intimate care tasks provided.
- Parent/guardian involvement is essential; they must provide required resources and consent.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

School Leadership

- Ensure the school has this policy and it is communicated to all stakeholders.
- Review the policy regularly.
- Ensure adequate staffing, training, and facilities are in place.

Principal / Deputy Principal / Designated Person

- Oversee the implementation of this policy.
- Ensure staff are briefed and trained.
- Ensure a record-keeping system is maintained.
- Ensure that Intimate Care Plans (see section 7) are developed for students who require ongoing intimate care.

Staff (Teachers, SNAs, Care Assistants etc.)

- Familiarise themselves with this policy and any individual student's Intimate Care Plan.
- Carry out intimate care tasks in line with agreed procedures, maintaining dignity, privacy and respect.

- Report any concerns (e.g., student distress, unwillingness, or changes in condition) to the Principal or designated safeguarding person.
- Wear protective equipment (e.g., gloves) as necessary and follow hygiene/ infection-control procedures.
- Keep accurate records of care delivered (date, time, nature of task, staff involved).

Parents/Guardians

- Provide the school with up-to-date information on the student's intimate care needs, medical/physical condition, toileting habits etc.
- Provide required resources such as spare clothing, nappies, wipes, creams, underwear etc.
- Participate in drawing up the student's Intimate Care Plan and agree to review it as required.
- Inform the school of any changes in the student's care needs.

Students (where appropriate)

- Be involved in the care plan as much as possible (choice, preference, level of independence).
- Be encouraged and supported to do as much for themselves as they are able.
- Express any concerns or discomfort about care arrangements.

6. Facilities & Hygiene Arrangements

- Care should be provided in a clean, safe environment with adequate privacy (door lockable or with supervised access).
- Staff must wear disposable gloves and other protective equipment when required; change gloves between students and dispose of waste in a sealed bag/bin.
- Schools should provide changing areas, hygienic disposal bins, wet-bags, spare clothing, wipes, cleaning materials.
- The school should maintain an adequate supply of resources (nappies, wipes, gloves etc) and check for expiry/stock regularly.
- A hand-washing and hygiene protocol should be followed for both staff and student before and after intimate care.
- The school should monitor infection control standards and update procedures accordingly (e.g., in case of outbreak of infectious illness).

7. Intimate Care Plan

For any student who has ongoing intimate care needs, the school will prepare an individual Intimate Care Plan in consultation with the student (as appropriate), parents/guardians, relevant staff and health professionals (if applicable). The Plan should include:

- The student's name, date of birth and class.
- Nature of the intimate care required (toileting, changing, washing, dressing).
- Level of independence of the student and what support they require.
- Staff authorised to provide care.
- Preferred gender of carer (if feasible).
- Resources and equipment required (nappies, wipes, creams, spare clothes).
- Hygiene and infection control procedures to be followed.
- Consent from parent/guardian (and student if appropriate) for care tasks.
- Review date and arrangements for monitoring and updating.
- Emergency arrangements (e.g., if usual staff absent).
- Communication arrangements with parents/guardians.

8. Accidents and One-Off Care Tasks

- If a student who does *not* have an established Intimate Care Plan experiences an occasional toileting accident or requires assistance, staff will:
 - Encourage the student to clean and change themselves if capable.
 - Notify parents/guardians of the incident.
 - If the student cannot manage themselves, two staff members familiar to the student should assist (if feasible) or contact parents.
 - Record the incident (date, time, student, support given).
 - Ensure spare clothing is available and soiled clothing is bagged and sent home.
- Parents should be informed of the school's policy on such incidents upon enrolment (or induction).
- Substitute or temporary staff may not be involved in intimate care tasks unless trained and authorised.

9. Safeguarding & Child Protection

- Intimate care tasks present specific safeguarding risks; all staff must follow the school's Child Protection Safeguarding Statement and procedures.
- Any concerns of abuse, harm or allegations arising during intimate care must be reported to the school's Designated Liaison Person (DLP) as per procedures.
- Staff should avoid being alone in an unsupervised situation with a student during intimate care; two members of staff should be present where feasible, or doors left ajar/in view.
- Permission forms should be signed by parents/guardians and stored securely in the student's file.

10. Training & Supporting Staff

- Staff required to carry out intimate care tasks must receive appropriate training in care techniques, hygiene/infection control, and safeguarding.
- Records of this training shall be maintained.
- The school should provide ongoing support, review sessions and ensure staff are aware of updates in guidance or legislation.
- Staff who feel uncomfortable or untrained for certain tasks should report this to the Principal and should not undertake the care until appropriately trained and authorised.

11. Confidentiality & Record Keeping

- All information about students' intimate care needs is treated as confidential, stored securely and accessed only by staff who need to know.
- Records of care provided (Intimate Care Plan, incident logs, staff involved) are maintained and reviewed.
- The student's dignity should be preserved; staff should not discuss intimate care tasks with others except where necessary for care and safeguarding purposes.

12. Monitoring, Review & Communication

- This policy will be reviewed at least every two years (or sooner if there is a change in legislation, guidance, or school context).
- Monitoring will include feedback from students (where appropriate), parents/guardians, staff, inspection of records and review of procedures.

- The policy will be communicated to staff, students (as appropriate), parents/guardians, the Board of Management/ETB and will be available on the school website or upon request.

Appendix 4 – Circular 64/2024

The operation/application and deployment of Special Education Teacher resources.