



BLACKROCK COLLEGE C.S.Sp.
ESTABLISHED 1860



Whole School Inclusion Policy

Review dates

SLT	Nov. 2024	Draft 1
AEN Co-ordinator Assistant AEN Co-ordinator	Dec. 2024	Draft 2
AEN Team & SLT	Jan 2025 > April 2025	Draft 3 - 6
STAFF	May	Draft 6
PARENTS' COUNCIL	May	Draft 6
STUDENTS' COUNCIL	May	Draft 6
BOM	June 2025	Final

Due for next review _____

Rationale:

This policy document aims to outline the form that additional educational support for students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN) takes in Blackrock 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). Additional publications have informed the content of this policy, “Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools – Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools” (DES, 2017), “Special Educational Needs – A Continuum of Support Guidelines for Teachers” (NEPS), Circular 0014/2017 (DES, 2017), ‘Exemption from the Study of Irish’ Circular 55/2022 and “NCSE Relate – A Regulation-First Approach to Reframing Behaviour and Supporting Student Engagement and Participation (2025).

This policy document should be read alongside other College policies which also inform our approach to whole school inclusion: Admissions Policy; Code of Behaviour; Assessment Policy; Homework Policy; Child Protection Guidelines; Child Safeguarding Statement, and; Best Practice concerning the Interrelationship between Pupils and all School Personnel.

Relationship to the School Mission, Values and Aims:

Blackrock College is a community which strives to ensure that students feel cherished, secure and happy. It gives students access to a broad and balanced education which aims to develop them spiritually, academically, socially, intellectually and culturally. We foster an atmosphere of learning that is holistic in approach and nurtures each individual student’s personal growth and development. As an inclusive school all students should be able to access an educational setting where:

- All students are valued equally
- Barriers to learning and participation are reduced
- There are systems and resources in place that ensure early identification and intervention
- Suitable learning challenges and targets are set to meet the diverse learning needs of the individual student
- All students have access to a broad, balanced, relevant and appropriately differentiated curriculum
- Development of self-esteem and of values such as respect for all individuals are paramount
- Students are encouraged to participate in extra- and co-curricular activities

These aims inform all learning and teaching in the Additional Educational Needs Department.

Definitions:

Students with particular educational needs are those who are restricted from participating in and benefiting from education because of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition. (EPSEN Act 2004).

Access to additional support:

A student may be selected for Support Teaching in the College in the following circumstances:

- A student who has had an educational psychological assessment which recommends Learning Support / Resource teaching.
- A student who has a Specific Learning Difficulty (SLD) or a General Learning Difficulty (GLD).
- A student who has a language exemption and/or a reduced timetable
- A student identified by a subject teacher or teachers as having difficulty with one or more of their subjects.
- A student with low SAT scores identified by the AEN team.
- A student with emotional or behavioural difficulties may be given links to relevant support both school-based and external agencies as is appropriate.
- A student with physical difficulties.
- A student with English as an Additional Language (EAL) needs.
- A student identified as Gifted and Talented (GAT) through a full educational psychological assessment.

In 2017, the Department introduced a new model of allocating additional supports to schools. The model provides additional education teaching supports directly to schools based on their educational profile. It offers schools greater autonomy to allocate teaching resources flexibly, based on students' needs with the fundamental objective that special education teaching resources are utilised in the optimum manner to improve learning experiences and educational outcomes for students with additional educational needs.

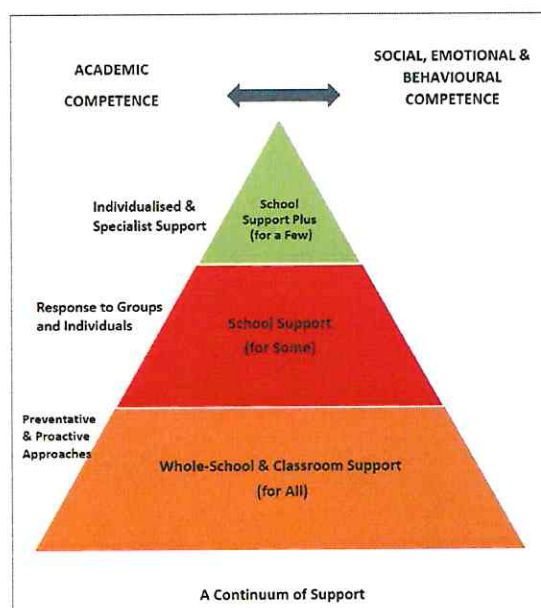
Implementation of this model is based on guiding principles outlined in "Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools – Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools" (DES, 2017) and it is on this foundation that the provision of AEN is delivered in Blackrock College:

- Resources provided to support students with additional educational needs will be used to facilitate truly inclusive schools.
- Supports provided will be based on identified needs and be informed by regular reviews.
- The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in the classroom.
- The supports provided to the school will be solely used for the support of students with identified needs.
- Students with the greatest levels of need will have access to the greatest level of support.
- A core team of AEN teachers will be established. All members will have access to continuing professional development to support the diverse needs of students with special educational needs.

A Continuum of Support, a problem-solving framework of assessment and intervention that enables the college to gather and analyse the progress of individual students, will be established. This framework recognises that additional educational needs range from mild

to severe and from transient to long term, and that students require different levels of support depending on their identified needs.

The Continuum of Support suggests the following levels of support:



The table below outlines the ways that Blackrock College collects evidence about students' educational needs at each level of the Continuum of Support. (see also **Appendix 1 – Referral Pathways in the College**)

Identification of Educational Needs through the Continuum of Support Process	
Whole-School and Classroom (Support for All)	Identification at this level is informed by: • Collection of information from 1st year • Handover meetings with Willow Park • Teacher observation • Teacher assessment • Learning Environment Checklist • Standardised tests of literacy/numeracy • Application cards/Progress tests • Student & Parental consultation • Dean/ Year Counsellor consultation • August meetings with Year Dean

School Support (for Some)

Insert school logo here

STUDENT SUPPORT FILE	
Name of Student	
Date of Birth	
School	
Date File Opened	
Date File Closed	

A Continuum of Support

ACADEMIC SUCCESS ↔ SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL & BEHAVIOURAL COMPETENCE

Developing a student support plan is the outcome of a problem solving process, involving school staff, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student. We start by identifying concerns, we gather information, we put together a plan and we review it.

At this level a Student Support Plan is devised and informed by:

- Teacher observation records
- Teacher-designed measures/assessments
- Target Support (AEN Dept & Post-Holder)
- Parent/Student meeting
- Learning environment checklist
- Diagnostic assessments in literacy/numeracy
- Formal observation of behaviour including ABC charts, frequency measures
- Formal assessment as appropriate, including screening measures for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
- Card System – daily, weekly, monthly
- Team-teaching, small group or individualised tuition
- Year counsellor meetings

School Support Plus (for a Few)

At this level subject teacher(s), parents and AEN teachers in collaboration with outside agencies, as required engage in a more detailed and systematic approach to information gathering and assessment.

- Formal and informal assessment and diagnostic tools,
- Teacher observation
- Student meeting with AEN Team and SNA Support
- Measures of cognitive ability and social, emotional, behavioural and adaptive functioning as appropriate.
- Individual Student Support Plan which involves long term planning and consultation.

Student Support File/Plan:

A Student Support File will be developed to enable the College to plan interventions and to track a student's pathway through the Continuum of Support. This facilitates teachers in documenting progress over time and assists in providing an appropriate level of support to students, in line with their level of need. (See **Appendix 2: Student Support Plan Template**)

All teachers (including subject teachers, special education teachers, SNAs and guidance counsellors), in accordance with data protection legislation, will have access to relevant information from the student's support plan. This will help teachers to differentiate their subject teaching to meet the needs of their students, and to set specific targets related to their subject areas.

Apart from differentiation in the classroom, provision for students with additional educational needs in the College is also carried out through...

- Universal Design for Learning,
- Modified papers
- Access to Assistive Technology;
- Referral to CTYI – DCU;
- Reduced timetable;
- Team-teaching
- In-class support, and;
- Withdrawal – on a small group or one-to-one basis.

It should be noted that following a period of intervention and a review of progress, a decision to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or move to a higher or lower level of support, may result.

8 Principles that underpin Whole School Inclusion

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) promotes a continuum of educational provision which is inclusive for all students and it has identified eight principles that underpin all aspects of the College's Whole School Inclusion Policy. These principles are also in line with our School Ethos and the core values of Blackrock College.

1. **Rights Based** – The best interest of the student is the primary consideration in all of our actions.
2. **Student Voice** – Students know what is and is not working in their classrooms and they have a right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them.
3. **Regulation First** – It is vital that the adults in the classroom recognise the power that positive relationships with their students has in making them feel safe and regulated.
4. **Neuro-affirmative** – We all have different needs and process things in different ways; we support all students in their learning and guide them in working towards achieving their best hopes.
5. **Staff & Student Wellbeing** – The role of the teacher is paramount to student wellbeing and support for the wellbeing of staff sustains engagement and enthusiasm.
6. **Unconditional Positive Regard** – All members of the school community are valued for 'who they are'. Self-esteem is nurtured and empathy is the catalyst for personal growth.

7. **Solution Focused** – The focus is on what is already working and what is wanted in the future rather than focusing on the problems.
8. **Universal Design for Learning** – we aim to create an environment where all learners can access, engage with, and succeed in their learning.

An outline of how these principles can be developed in the classroom is available [here](#).

With these principles and approaches in action, a true vision for whole school inclusion emerges. This involves ‘**Shifting from**’ many traditional practices and ‘**Moving towards**’ an inclusive and relational approach to the classroom as per the examples below.

Shifting from:	Moving towards:
Seeing behaviour as something to manage	Recognising behaviour as communication and working to address unmet needs
Hypothesising functions of behaviour	Recognising stressors and understanding the influence of the environment
Relying on reinforcement through rewards	Finding intrinsic motivation by reducing barriers
Changing behaviours	Changing the environment to increase wellbeing
Collecting data on ‘what is happening’ with factors such as intensity and duration	Collecting data on ‘why it is happening’, examining stressors and occurrences in the day
Finding the problem	Leading with strengths and remaining solution focused
Focusing on when behaviours happen	Focusing on when they don’t happen and identifying what is successful at that time
Compliance	Connection
Doing things ‘to’ or ‘for’ students	Doing things ‘with’ students
Starting with individual interventions	Making change at a universal level that is consistent and manageable in the long term

Inclusive Education in Blackrock College

While creating a truly inclusive school requires the engagement of the whole school, there are specific roles and duties assigned for managing the College's response for students with additional educational needs.

AEN Department:

The Department comprises an AEN Co-ordinator, an assistant AEN Co-ordinator, Resource teachers and Special Needs Assistants and teachers who have studied for a Diploma in Special Education. There is also a large team of teachers involved in delivering the Special Education Teaching allocation hours. All teachers are encouraged to engage with continuous professional development in this area. The work of the department is actively supported by the Principal, the Deputy Principals, the Guidance & Counselling Department, the Deans, the Pastoral Care Team and the Chaplains. External agencies such as NEPS, NCSE through the SENO, HSE, Oide and other professionals work with the department regularly.

Board of Management:

- Oversees the development, implementation and review of the Whole School Inclusion Policy.
- Enables a periodic review of the range of curriculum provision within the school.
- Provides resources for the professional development of staff in supporting students with special educational needs.
- Ensures adequate accommodation and resources.
- Provides a secure facility for the storage of records.
- Ensures that the rights of parents as prescribed in legislation are upheld in the school.

Principal:

- Assumes overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the college's policies and procedures relating to the inclusion of students with additional educational needs.
- Oversees a whole-school approach to assessment and screening to identify needs and to guide the allocation of appropriate supports.
- In collation with the in-school management team, deploys staff, allocates resources and organises both students and the timetable.
- Ensures that systems are in place for effective sharing of relevant information on student's needs with all subject teachers.
- Facilitates the continuing professional development of all teachers in relation to the education of students with special educational needs.
- Consults and liaises with parents, students and outside bodies and agencies

Additional Educational Needs (AEN) Co-ordinator & Assistant Co-ordinator

- Co-ordinate data-gathering, screening and testing of students.
- Transition planning
- Take a lead role in the design, implement and review of student plans i.e. general support plan, behaviour plan/contract, individual learning profile, IEP, personalised

learning plan in conjunction with the Post- Holder in charge of Student Support Plans (SSPs).

- Support the communication of information regarding students' needs to relevant school personnel including subject teachers and Deans.
- Liaise with external agencies – NEPS; NCSE and allied health professionals.
- Liaise with management and relevant post-holders.
- Advocate for AEN students.
- Promote best practice teaching and learning strategies for use with students that have additional educational needs.
- Involvement with RACE, DARE and Irish exemptions
- Ensure GDPR compliance within the Department.
- Communicates with, meets and advises parents and students as required.

Deans:

- Works directly with and offer pastoral support to students that have additional educational needs.
- Actively supports the work of AEN department and the AEN Co-ordinator
- Liaises directly with mainstream teachers regarding relevant students
- Maintains a weekly record of student performance (weekly application cards).
- Utilises information gathered from weekly application cards and progress tests to help identify students that may need the support of the AEN department
- Liaises between the year team meeting and the AEN Co-ordinator.
- Provide a key point of contact between the student, home and the AEN department.
- Co-ordinates individual student review meetings between relevant personnel – this may include the student, parents, AEN Co-ordinator, AP2 Student Support Plan postholder, member of the SLT etc.
- Monitor and reports back, to the principal, on students' active engagement in all aspects of College life.

Individual AEN Teachers:

- Works directly with students that have additional educational needs.
- Actively supports the work of the department and the AEN Co-ordinator
- May be involved in team-teaching in mainstream classes with mainstream teachers.
- Should be familiar with a wide range of teaching approaches, methodologies and resources to meet a variety of needs.
- Engages with CPD in additional educational needs.
- Implements SMART targets/IEPs where relevant.
- Liaises directly with subject teachers regarding relevant students and plans interventions carefully to address student's priority learning needs and to achieve the targets identified in the SSPs.
- Assists the AEN Coordinator in the gathering of information for Student Support Plans or applications for RACE, DARE or Irish exemptions.
- Maintains a weekly record of work covered and assesses and records outcomes for students to inform targets for the next phase of intervention.

- Provides the AEN Co-ordinator with an end of year report which informs planning for the next academic year.

Guidance Counsellor:

- Administers diagnostic assessment tests to relevant year groups.
- Counsels in personal, educational and career development.
- Provides career information management.
- Consults with the AEN team, staff and parents.
- Provides referrals to other professionals and agencies, when relevant.
- Meets with students to assist them in subject choices

Subject Teacher:

- Has primary responsibility for the progress of all students in his/her class – lessons need to be planned carefully to address the diverse needs within the classroom.
- Collaborates with the AEN Coordinator, Dean and/or resource teacher in identifying pupils who may have general or specific learning difficulties.
- Provides learning activities, materials and opportunities that will allow all students to be active participants in their own learning.
- Attempts to differentiate the curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of all pupils, e.g. setting objectives at appropriate levels, modifying presentations, questioning appropriately, intervening to promote social and emotional competence and embedding of ICT in teaching, learning and assessment.

Team Teacher:

- Offers additional support in class, especially for those who have been identified as having AEN.
- Identifies what students need support through classroom observation and from studying the Student Support plans within each class group.
- Supports the approaches and methodologies of the subject teacher that facilitate the inclusion of students with additional educational needs.
- Assists students in engaging with learning activities and materials that will enable success.

Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

- Special Needs Assistants make a valuable contribution to the capacity of the school to provide inclusive education for students with Additional Educational Needs. The duties of the SNA are assigned by the Principal acting on behalf of the Board of Management and are outlined in Circular 0030/2014.
- When the SNA is engaged in assisting a student or a group of students in relation to a particular learning task, this should always take place in accordance with the directions of the teacher who has assigned the task.
- An SNA is expected to treat all matters relating to school business and their work in the school as strictly confidential.

Parents/Guardians:

- Blackrock College recognises the right of parents/guardians of students with additional educational needs to be involved in and consulted about the programme of education available to their child.
- Good parental engagement is a critical factor in enhancing outcomes for students with additional educational needs.
- Communication is especially important if students are taking medication and dosages are altered.
- Parents will be informed on the nature and type of special educational provision that is available in the College. In all cases where screening, assessment and profiling are conducted, parents are consulted and their permission sought.
- Parents will be consulted in relation to their child's needs and strengths, on the supports and strategies being developed to support their children and in regular reviews of progress.
- When a Student Support Plan is being developed, parents will be consulted.

Student:

- All Student Support Plans are student-centred.
- A student for whom a support plan is being developed is consulted as an essential part of the development process.
- Students are encouraged to approach the AEN Coordinator if they have concerns about their learning.
- Students are encouraged to contribute to their learning targets. See **Appendix 4: Gathering Information – My Thoughts about School Checklist**

Nurse:

- Meets with staff and explains any medical needs an AEN student may have.
- Will engage with Parents/ Guardians on any medications that are used by the students. This information is shared with the Deans and the AEN department.

RACE applications:

Reasonable accommodations in certificate examinations may be available to students with particular additional educational needs. Arrangements may include the provision of a reader or scribe, use of a word processor, tape recorder or C Pen Reader, use of a separate centre, or a spelling and grammar waiver. Students will be able to practise their accommodations in resource class and during Easter examinations.

DARE applications:

Applications for DARE will be made in consultation with the AEN Co-ordinator, the relevant post-holder and the Guidance Counsellor.

Irish Exemptions:

All Irish exemptions are applied for having regard for the processes outlined in Circular 0054/2022. Parents must begin the process of applying for their son's exemption from the study of Irish by writing to the Head of AEN. On receipt of this written application, the Head of AEN or the relevant Deputy Principal will contact parents to explain the protocols involved.

English as an Additional Language (EAL):

An EAL learner is any learner whose home language is different to the language of schooling. In Blackrock, all EAL learners are provided with the help and guidance that is needed to gain access to the mainstream curriculum and to integrate and socialise with the school community and to achieve to the best of their abilities.

Each EAL student will be assessed using material from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) so that the student, their subject teachers and the language support team can work collaboratively in planning the next learning steps in a progressive and sequential manner in the context of the Continuum of Support.

Assessments will be carried out for each of the four skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Each EAL students language ability will be measured using the CEFR international six-point scale and appropriate targets will be set. Once an EAL student has reached the B1 Threshold on the language ability scale, he will be considered competent in accessing the curriculum.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management on Tuesday 17 June 2025

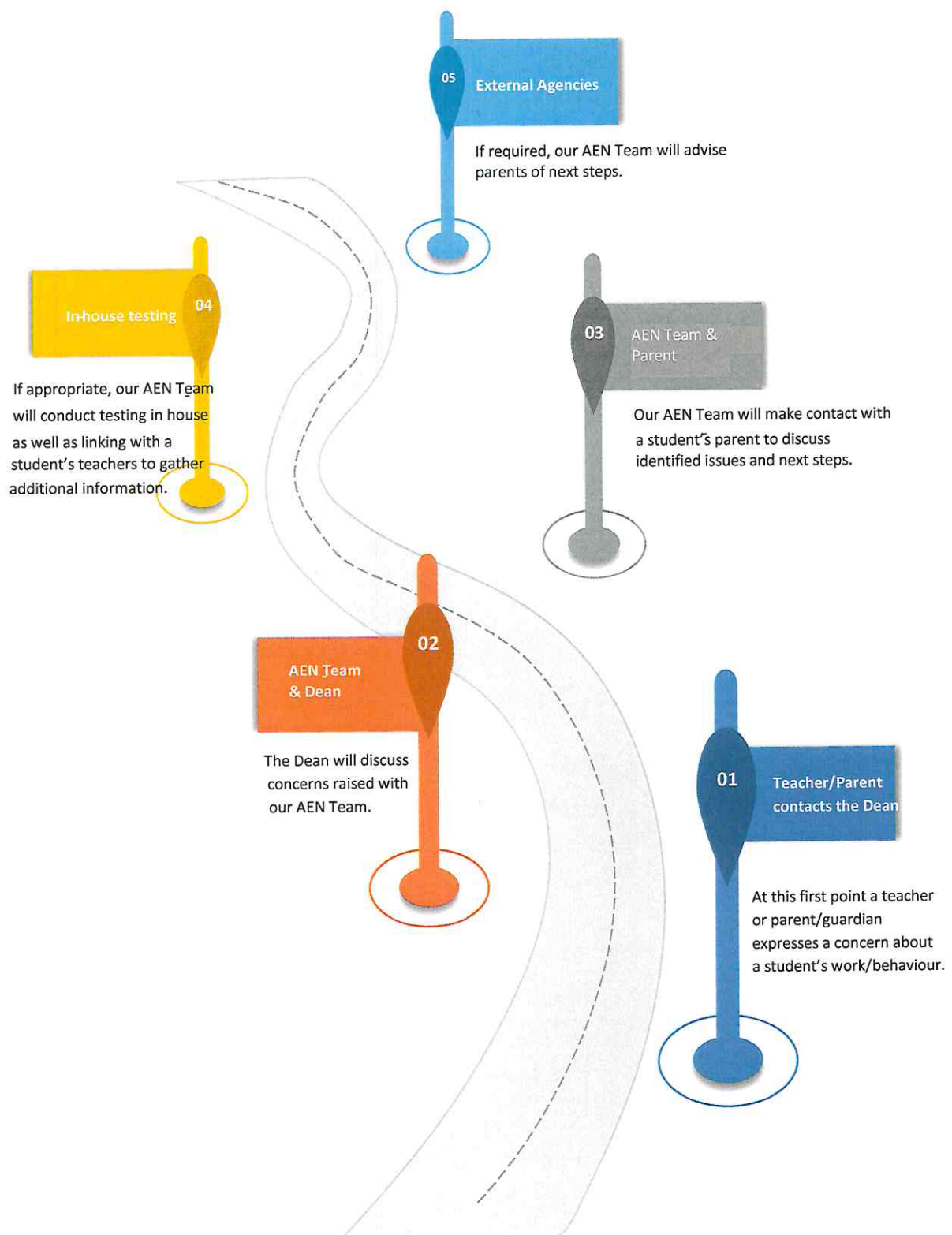
Signed:


Chairperson, Board of Management

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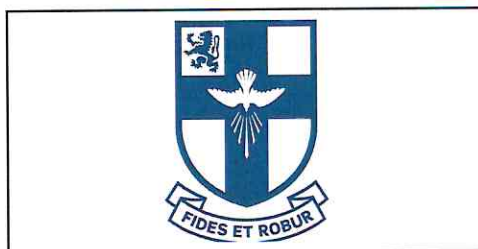

Secretary, Board of Management

Appendix 1: Referral Pathways in the College – Additional Educational Needs (AEN)



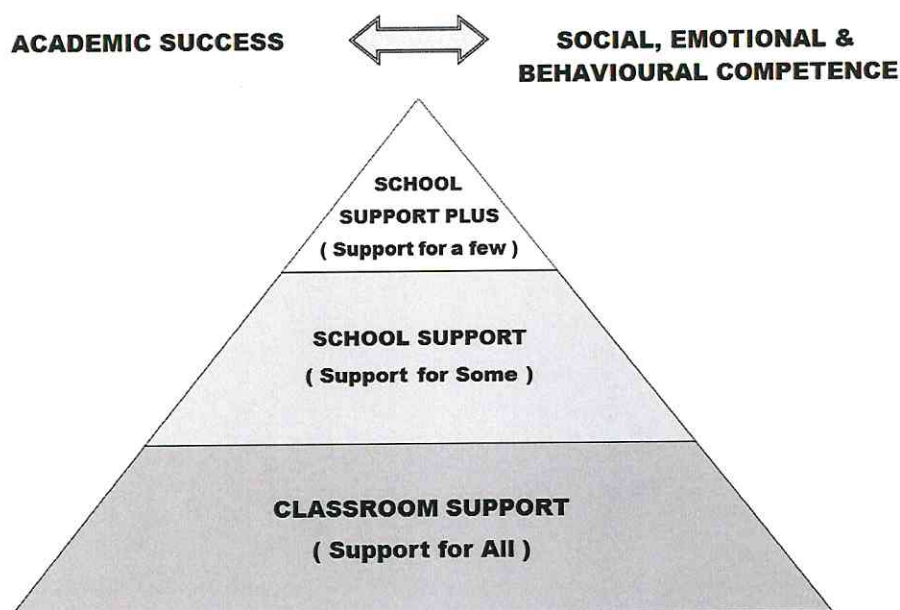
Our AEN department will work with the student, parent, relevant post-holder and external agencies in creating a Student Support File/Plan.

Appendix 2: Student Support File/Plan Template



STUDENT SUPPORT FILE	
Name of Student	
Date of Birth	
School	
Date File Opened	
Date File Closed	

A Continuum of Support



Developing a student support plan is the outcome of a problem solving process, involving school staff, parent(s)/ guardian(s) and the student. We start by identifying concerns, we gather information, we put together a plan and we review it.

Student Support File, Log of Actions

Date	Actions

Support Checklist

Name:	Age:	Class:
General Information	Date Checked	Comments
1. Parents/ Guardians Consulted		
2. Information from previous school/preschool gathered		
3. Hearing		
4. Vision		
5. Medical Needs		
6. Basic Needs Checklist completed		
7. Assessment of learning- screening		
8. Observation of learning style/approach to learning		
9. Observation of behaviour		
10. Interview with pupil		
11. Classroom work differentiated?		
12. Learning environment adapted?		
13. Yard/school environments adapted?		
14. Informal or formal consultation/advice with outside professionals?		
15. Advice given by learning support/resource teacher or other school staff?		
16. Other interventions put in place in school?		
Action needed		
<i>Helpful references: SEN: A Continuum of Support: Resource Pack for Teachers, pp. 13-16, 18 to 20; BESD: A Continuum of Support, p 7; A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools, Resource Pack for Teachers, pp32-36; Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools, pp20</i>		

SUPPORT PLAN*

Classroom Support
School Support (Support for SOME)
School Support Plus (Support for A FEW)

To be completed by the teacher(s).

For help, see *SEN: A Continuum of Support - Guidelines for Teachers*; *BESD: A Continuum of Support – Guidelines for Teachers* pp.71-74; *A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools, Resource Pack for Teachers*, pp. 51, 53, 54, 57.

Student's name		Age	
Lead teacher		Class/year	
Start date of plan			
Review date of plan			
Student's strengths and interests			
Priority concerns			
Possible reasons for concerns			
Targets for the student			
Strategies to help the student achieve the targets			
Staff involved and resources needed			
Signature of parent(s)/ guardian(s)			
Signature of teacher			

*A consultation with a NEPS psychologist/ other professionals may contribute to this plan.

Appendix 3: Gathering Information – My Thoughts about School Checklist

NAME: _____ YEAR _____ DATE _____

The things I like best at school are:

The things I don't like about school are:

The things that I am good at are:

The things I find hard are:

I am happy in class when:

I am happy during break and lunch times when:

My friends are:

I need help with:

Teachers in school can help me by:

Teachers would describe me as:

My parents would describe me as:

Adults I get on best with in school are:

I get into trouble in school when:

The things I do that make my teachers feel unhappy are:

The things my teachers do that make me feel unhappy are:

I make my teachers happy when:

The things my teachers do that make me feel happy are:

The class rules are:

If someone breaks the rules:

Rewards I like best are:

The things that I need to change are