

Policy on Special Educational Needs and Learning Difficulties

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I. Policy Statement

“We look to the future with what we feel is a realistic optimism. The Church has a tradition of ministry to people with learning difficulties and disabilities, and this tradition will fuel the stronger, more broadly based efforts called for by contemporary circumstances. We also have faith that our quest for justice, increasingly enlisted on the side of individuals with disabilities, will work powerfully in their behalf. No one would deny that every man, woman and child has the right to develop his or her potential to the fullest. With God's help and our own determination, the day will come when that right is realized in the lives of all people.”(Bishops’ Conference Statement of People with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities 1976)

As a Catholic School we recognise and affirm the dignity of all, as people made in the image and likeness of God. It is our Christian duty not only to hold and affirm this fundamental principle but to act upon it. The great majority of children grasp the opportunities offered in school, to grow to become self-disciplined, happy, mature young adults. Some young people, however, suffer disadvantages which limit their ability to access both the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. In caring for the most vulnerable and ensuring an inclusive framework in our search for excellence in all and for all, the Special Educational Needs Department work towards making our vision a reality.

Many young people find themselves in the position of needing additional support at some time in their school career; the pupil who is taking longer to read than his friends, the child who has been ill and absent for a long time, the child who breaks both wrists and needs help using a laptop computer. Then there are the children with permanent disadvantages to overcome. Physical disabilities which limit their mobility and stamina, sensory impairment, behavioural and learning difficulties across the whole range from being very gifted to the handicap of specific learning difficulties and all the associated problems of limited literacy and numeracy skills.

St Leonard’s recognises the need to make provision for these children to include them in every aspect of school life. For a Special Educational Needs Department to be effective we need full participation of staff, pupils, parents and governors so that effective provision is made to secure teaching and learning opportunities that meet the needs of all pupils as a fully integrated part of the school vision and the mission of the Church.

2. Aims

2.1 The aims of this policy are to promote good practice in our detection and management of special educational needs and to explain the support we can provide for children who have learning difficulties and the co-operation we will need from parents.

2.2 This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required.

3. ‘Special educational needs’ and ‘learning difficulty’

2.1 Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

2.2 Children have a learning difficulty if they:

2.2.1 have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age;
or

2.2.2 have a disability which prevents or hinders the child from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority (if your child has a disability, please ask to see our Disability & Accessibility Policy)

2.3 A child must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the ‘language or medium of communication of the home is different from the language in which he or she is or will be taught.’ (Education Act 1996, Section 312(1), (2) and (3)). However, children for whom English is an additional language will be provided with appropriate support. (please see the School’s Statement of Provision for Students with English as an Additional Language).

2.4 A child who finds a particular subject difficult does not necessarily have a 'learning difficulty' in the legal sense of that expression; there will often be disparities in the speed with which children learn, in their skill at solving problems and in their general acumen. Support is provided at St Leonard's Catholic School which children can choose to attend if they need particular help with one or another aspect of a subject.

2.5 The expression 'learning difficulty' covers a wide variety of conditions and may include those known as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, semantic processing difficulty and learning problems which result from emotional or behavioural disorders. The expression may also include those who have problems with their eyesight or hearing or who have an autistic disorder.

2.6 Learning difficulties may affect children who have a high IQ and academic ability as well as those of lower IQ and ability. Sometimes a child's learning difficulty becomes apparent for the first time at the age of 11+ or older, when the educational pressures tend to increase.

3. Terms herein

3.1 **The School:** St Leonard's Catholic School is a mainstream voluntary aided Catholic school with high academic standards. Even so, we may carry out screening tests pupils, in order to detect signs of previously undiagnosed learning difficulties.

3.2 **Provision:** The provision which we can make for children who appear to have a learning difficulty includes: leaning support; targeted teaching, and formal assessment either by our own teachers or, where appropriate, by referral to an educational psychologist or other external specialist.

3.3 **Consultation:** We will do all that is reasonable to report and consult with parents about their child's learning difficulties and to ensure that teachers are given any necessary information about a child's learning difficulties and that teaching practices are appropriate.

4. Implementation and procedures

4.1 **Screening test:** We may carry out standardised testing on every pupil commencing in Year 7. We may recommend a more comprehensive diagnostic assessment to be completed by an educational psychologist or other external agency, should these results, or other indicators, suggest this to be desirable. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) will provide details upon request.

4.2 **Screening test:** During a pupils' first year and at each Key Stage thereafter, we may carry out a screening test, the results of which will be reported to you. The tests which we use are not diagnostic tests of a kind which an educational psychologist would carry out, and they are not infallible. The purpose of the tests is to detect circumstances which may need further investigation or a formal assessment.

4.3 **Outcome of tests:** If the outcome of a test or any other circumstances give us a reason to think that your child may have a learning difficulty, we will report and consult with you as necessary and make recommendations.

4.4 **Formal assessment:** If the test results indicate that your child may have a learning difficulty which ought to be assessed without delay, we may ask you to agree to your child being formally assessed by an educational psychologist/external agency or specialist and we will ask you to agree to follow his/her recommendations unless there are persuasive reasons to the contrary. You may consult an LA educational psychologist or one of your own choice.

4.5 Targeted teaching: If justified by the test results, we may suggest a course of targeted teaching by an appropriate specialist. St Leonard's Catholic School's targeted teaching will take place on a one-to-one basis or in small groups in school. The frequency of lessons will be variable but usually there will be two lessons per week during term time.

4.6 Learning support: If the test results indicate that there may be a learning difficulty but the circumstances are not such to indicate an immediate formal assessment or a course of targeted teaching, we may suggest that your child gives up one of the normal curriculum subjects and instead attends a small learning support group which will concentrate on developing skills such as a phonics, spelling, maths and handwriting.

4.7 Code of Practice: Our approach to the detection and management of learning difficulties will be guided by the *0-25 Special Educational Needs code of practice* (DfE/2014), Department for Education (DfE), September 2014, or any substituting or amending Code of Practice issued from time to time by the Department for Education (DfE). Under Section 25 of the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities have a duty to ensure integration between educational provision and training provisions, health and social care provision where this would promote wellbeing and improve the quality of provision for disabled children young people and those with SEND. This require close co-operation with education, health and social care partners to research, plan, commission and review services.

4.8 Statements: Parents have the right under s 329(1) of the Education Act 1996 and the 0-25 SEND Code of Practice 2014 to ask the Local Authority to make an assessment with a view to drawing up an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment/Plan (EHP) formerly a statement of Special Educational Needs. The School also has the right (under s 329A) to ask the Local Authority to arrange an assessment. The School will always consult with parents before exercising this right. If the Local Authority refuses to make an assessment, the parents or the School have a right of appeal.

4.9 Where a prospective pupil has a Education, Health and Care Plan (EHP) or Statement of Educational Needs, we will consult the parents and, where appropriate, the Local Authority to ensure that the provision specified in the Statement can be delivered by the School. We will co-operate with the Local Authority to ensure that relevant reviews of Statements are carried out as required.

5. Welfare Needs and Disability

5.1 Welfare needs: The School recognises that pupils with special educational needs or learning difficulties may be at risk of being bullied. The School has an Anti-bullying Policy which makes it clear that bullying behaviour of any kind is not acceptable and will be taken very seriously. If parents are concerned about their child's welfare they can approach the pupil's tutor/form teacher or any senior member of staff to discuss their concerns in private at any time.

5.2 Disability: The School recognises that some pupils with special educational needs or learning difficulties may also have a disability. Pupils and parents are referred to the School's Disability & Accessibility Policy. The School will make all reasonable adjustments in order to afford opportunity to disabled pupils.

6. Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

6.1 St Leonard's Catholic School's SENCO is Mr Martyn Capper. He has responsibility for:

6.1.1 ensuring liaison with parents and other professionals in respect to children's special educational needs;

- 6.1.2 advising and supporting other staff in the School;
- 6.1.3 ensuring that appropriate Individual Educational Plans / Pupil Profiles / Provision Maps and a SEN Register are in place;
- 6.1.4 ensuring that relevant background information about individual children with special education needs is collected, recorded and updated;
- 6.1.5 undertaking any other appropriate duties in accordance with the Code of Practice on special educational needs;
- 6.1.6 where applicable, line management of other support staff.
- 6.1.7 where applicable, budgetary provision for the department.

7. Responsibility

Parents bear the overall responsibility for taking decisions about the management of their child's learning difficulties. A parent who would prefer to have a formal assessment should make arrangements accordingly with the School or outside but must ensure that we are given copies of all advice and reports received.

8. Concerns

We need to know immediately if your child's progress or behaviour causes you concern so that we can devise and agree a strategy with you and carry it out.

9. Examinations

Children who have been diagnosed as having a learning difficulty may be eligible to apply for individual examination arrangements. You are asked to liaise with the SENCO and/or the Examinations' Officer in good time with respect to this.

10. Additional Information

The Confident Schools Confident Parents sets out further information for Parents and Carers of young people with Special Educational Needs. Information is also available in the school website. www.st-leonards.durham.sch.uk