

## Rockbrook Park School

### Policy on additional educational needs

#### Context

Rockbrook Park School was founded in 1975 by a group of parents who were inspired by the work of St Josemaria Escriva, the founder of Opus Dei. The trustee body is FamEd Ltd.

The school emphasises the importance of character development and academic excellence as twin pillars of education. The school's mentoring system, working in co-operation with parents and teachers, is central to the fulfilment of Rockbrook's aims.

The school has a growing enrolment – currently 172 students. Students come from the local and wider Dublin area extending from Bray to Naas. The school endeavours to foster a genuine respect for others and a desire for learning. School management is committed to supporting parents in their role as educators.

#### Values

At Rockbrook we acknowledge that value of every young person. In providing an environment which encourages academic excellence, Rockbrook aims, within its resources, to meet the needs of all those attending the school, no matter their ability, background or personal circumstances. The school seeks to provide every student with high quality teaching and learning opportunities both within and beyond the classroom. Within the resources available the school will seek to maximise academic progress and personal development for all students, responding to their individual needs and, where possible, removing barriers to their learning.

#### Policy development

The policy has been developed by the Additional Educational Needs (AEN) coordinator and teachers providing learning support within the school. During the 2016-17 academic year the principal will brief the board on the policy and seek its ratification. (Policy ratified June 2017)

#### Aims

Our long-term aims are:

- To maximise academic progress, character education and personal development for all students enrolled in the school
- To ensure that vulnerable or students experiencing disadvantage or students with identified particular educational needs are given the support they need to remove the barriers to their learning and personal development
- To help personal mentors to understand the individual learning needs of mentees so that they can make an additional further contribution to the personal development of those students
- To ensure that all our staff understand their role in relation to these aims and, in particular, understand that a teacher is a teacher of every student including those with AEN.

A student is considered to have additional educational needs (AEN) if he superior learning potential or if he has learning difficulties or disabilities (communication / social / behavioural / personal) that make it harder for him to learn or develop himself than for most other students of about the same age. AEN students include all those identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN), thus having had (pre April 2017) additional resources allocated to them by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), or fitting that designation (post April 2017).

Many children will have additional educational needs of some kind during their education. At Rockbrook, most students can overcome the barriers their difficulties present quickly and easily, but others will need extra help for some or all of their time while in school.

Good quality teaching, differentiated for individual pupils, is the first key step in responding to pupils who have or may have AEN. Additional intervention and support cannot fully compensate for a lack of good quality teaching.

In most cases the process of identifying suitable support for pupils starts with the assumption that if normal classroom provision is of high quality it will meet the needs of most students including those who have been in receipt of SEN provision at earlier stages in their education. Where classroom provision appears not to meet the needs of some pupils, or where additional resource supports have been provided to students by NCSE, the AEN coordinator, working with the principal, will seek to provide for those needs.

Where young people need educational provision or personal development support, the aim is to have a graduated response. This acknowledges that a student may need specific support from the school or may need further tailored support which may include external experts. This approach is designed to focus on individual need and outcomes and raise the aspirations of and expectations for all students with AEN, bearing in mind at all times that many parents may not be in a position to bear an additional resource provision burden.

## Objectives for AEN support in Rockbrook Park School

Teachers will:

1. Make regular assessments of progress for all pupils
2. Identify pupils making less than expected progress given their age and individual circumstances.

That is, progress which:

- is significantly slower than that of their peers starting from the same baseline
  - is slower than the student's previous rate of progress
  - fails to close the attainment gap between the student and their peers
  - widens the attainment gap
3. Adapt their teaching to address the needs of students identified as making less than expected progress
  4. Apply school behaviour and reward systems to ensure students complete the work set for them to the best of their ability so as to make good progress
  5. Give regular feedback to students on their work and cultivate students' reflection and response to this feedback (drawing on Assessment for Learning techniques)
  6. Refer students to the AEN coordinator or to the principal where students in their class may require additional learning support (using the referral form available)
  7. Teachers who act as student mentors will also liaise with AEN co-ordinator with a view to enhancing, where possible, the effectiveness of any additional support being provided.

The principal and school management team will:

1. Work within the guidance provided by NCSE and DES, including new April 2017 guidelines
2. Provide resource support teaching hours and Special Needs Assistant (SNA) access in line with any specific NCSE allocation
3. Manage teaching resources and SNA access to best effect for all students requiring additional supports
4. Monitor the work of learning support
5. Develop a clear framework within which additional needs resources are seen as part of whole school provision for all students.

The Additional Educational Needs Coordinator and learning support team will:

1. Work within the guidance provided by NCSE, and gather inputs from parents, producing an IEP for all students with identified additional education needs and any other student who might benefit
2. Monitor **on a term basis** the academic performance, attendance and personal development (as recorded in school reports or other school information) of students receiving AEN support.
3. Assess promptly any students who are brought to their attention as possibly having additional educational and/or additional needs, and add them to the AEN register as appropriate
4. Seek to integrate students within the whole school ensuring that they make best use of the mainstream curriculum and extra-curricular provision
5. Accommodate the needs of the 'whole person'; recognising that a student's personal, social, spiritual and physical development are as important as their academic progress
6. Assist other teaching staff in meeting the needs of students

7. Liaise with the students' mentors and parents as required to ensure home and school work together effectively in addressing AEN.
8. Develop monitoring, support and intervention systems which seek to identify poor progress and the causes of poor progress, and address these, thus enabling students to succeed within mainstream provision
9. To regularly review progress of any students with AEN and to adapt intervention and provision as appropriate, identifying any additional needs.

## Identifying Additional Educational Needs

Students will be considered for identification as having additional educational needs where they:

- a. Have academic achievement which is substantially below the class norm or who show significantly weak performances in standardised testing.
- b. Are identified by their previous school as having special educational needs (SEN)
- c. Are consistently making less progress than is expected for a student of their age in spite of provision in the normal school curriculum
- d. Are judged to be facing a particular difficulty which is affecting their learning (such as, but not limited to: dyslexia, physical disability or a mental health condition)

When identifying need, the four broad categories shown below can provide an overview of the range of needs which can be identified as additional educational needs:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Social, mental and emotional health
- Sensory and/or physical.

Ideally students should get externally assessed, particularly if that assessment can help in the resolution of some of their difficulties or can lead to additional resources being made available by NCSE or by the school. The purpose of identifying students with additional educational needs is to work out what action needs to be taken to remove barriers to learning and maximise a pupil's personal and academic development. Often (but not always) the identification of a source of difficulty can help a student respond better.

The following may also impact on progress and attainment but are not in themselves considered to be additional educational needs:

- Disability
- Poor attendance and punctuality
- Poor health or welfare
- Speaking English as a second or additional language
- Being in a cared-for circumstance

Students with the above characteristics will be considered for identification as having additional educational needs when it seems likely that extra provision which is additional to and different from that which is offered through the school's curriculum might help address any deficit in their personal or academic progress. In many of these cases the support of an identified appropriate personal mentor may be all that is required.

## The school's SEN and AEN register

The SEN register records the names and needs of students who experience barriers to learning that the school seeks to address and who have been identified by the NCSE as requiring SEN support. That is, the SEN register includes only those students with specific resource hours designated by NCSE (i.e. low incidence resource hours). As from April 2017, due to changes in NCSE/DES approach, this register may not be maintained, with all these students being recorded only on the AEN register.

The AEN register includes students with identified learning difficulties whom the school deems to qualify for support under the NCSE high incidence allocation (e.g. students with dyslexia). As well as these, other students in the school who require provision which is additional to what is normally

provided by a school will also form part of the AEN register. There may also be students not on either register who will receive attention from the learning support team and/or resource support from time to time or on an ongoing basis (e.g. talented students, students with particular difficulties such as anxiety, difficult family circumstance, looked-after children). Students may also move off this register during the course of the year if their difficulties have been sufficiently addressed.

As a school we also wish to become increasingly structured in the way we administer, evaluate and apply additional provision and the maintenance of SEN and AEN registers will support this.

The SEN register and accompanying notes will be regularly updated by notes from the learning support team. Staff will be given access to some of this information in an appropriate form. Similar processes will apply to the AEN register. There is a clear challenge in providing easy access for all relevant staff to useful and detailed but confidential information about young people. The learning support team will work to develop increasingly efficient ways of communicating this information whilst safeguarding the privacy of the students whose information is shared. At this stage it is envisaged that this information will be available in paper format only and not electronically circulated.

### The learning support team’s role in additional educational provision

The learning support team will comprise the principal, the AEN co-ordinator and other members of staff as appropriate, including the guidance counsellor. It will work with all staff who are providing additional support by way of resource classes, team teaching etc. It will involve the guidance counsellor and SNAs in its deliberations as required. It takes responsibility for:

- Developing intervention programmes and other provision that meet the needs identified
- Monitoring the impact of this provision
- Recording the use of this provision for each student
- Managing access to the provision through the *Additional Educational Needs Referral Process*, so as to ensure that resources are distributed fairly and effectively and that students’ experience of the school’s curriculum is maintained while additional provision is made
- Working with the school’s exam secretary to ensure those on the SEN register receive appropriate exam supports from the State Examinations Commission.

Much of the additional provision will be provided by teachers in one-to-one classes, in small class provision, in team-teaching, in mentoring or via extra-curricular activity (e.g. club activity, sports).

### Graduated response to AEN Support

A graduated approach is adopted in order to match provision to need. This approach is designed to ensure support is focused on individual need and personal outcomes. The AEN Register details areas of need of any students who fall into the following categories:

<p>Initial Support “Level 1 intervention”</p>	<p>The class teacher or form master recognises that a student has difficulties and provides differentiated learning activities or personal support, advice or guidance. This may include help with work outside lessons, use of study support, mentor support. It may include access to SNA support (e.g. in transitioning to second level)</p>	<p>At this point a student is not recorded on the AEN register; many students will receive support such as this.</p>
---	---	--

School Support “Level 2 intervention”	A student has additional provision, designed to support their access to the school curriculum. This will normally be in the form of an intervention programme which takes place over a duration of a school term or a year. Consultation with parents and students will take place if it is envisaged that this intervention will be required for a longer period. External reports may be requested.	At this point the student’s needs are recorded and the student may be added to the AEN register. If the student has externally measured needs and specific resource support allocated under NCSE provision the student is recorded on the SEN register. Every such student will have a IEP drawn up which will be reviewed twice annually.
Moving on “Level 3 intervention”	For those with more complex needs, provision will be made, where possible, for public examination support and for ongoing consultation with parents and student around successfully engaging with their post-school environment.	

## The AEN support process.

### Stage 1: Assess

#### *For students joining at the start of first year:*

- o Prior to transfer to Rockbrook, primary schools may provide information for those students with SEN. These students are added to the AEN & SEN registers pending assessment of their need on arrival in the school. Parents are requested to provide any relevant educational assessments that may have been conducted. Where additional resources may be provided by NCSE, these are requested by school management based on the information available to it. In addition to the school’s induction programme for all new children and their parents, members of the learning support team will meet with all parents of incoming children with SEN during the first month. The SNA will also be available to help in settling the students during the first few months. Where required the Form-master will appoint class buddies. Due to the large number of feeder schools to Rockbrook the school does not commit to meeting with staff in these primary schools around SEN issues, unless there are special complex issues involved.
- o The school conducts entrance tests to make a general evaluation of any difficulties a student might encounter on coming to Rockbrook. The school operates a mixed ability class placement policy.
- o During September initial standardised testing is done on all 1<sup>st</sup> year students. From 2016 we will use the full range of post-primary tests provided by GL-Assessment (includes attitude to school, numeracy, literacy, CAT tests). All students whose attainment falls below an identified standard in English or Mathematics at entry will be assessed by the learning support team in partnership with the relevant subject teachers with a view to see what, if any, additional support should be provided. All students also receive study skills seminars before or at the beginning of the second term.

#### *For students joining at other times:*

Information about students' SEN is communicated to the school via the admissions process and passed on to the learning support team. Where appropriate, contact will be made with the school of origin for more information about the provision that has been made for the student in the past.

#### *Ongoing monitoring of students:*

Needs can become apparent at any stage in a student's development. Queries regarding possible AEN are followed up in response to concerns raised by mentors, parents or teaching staff and, where appropriate, students will be referred via the *Additional Provision Referral Process*.

#### *Additional Provision Referral Process*

The *Additional Provision Referral Process* is started at the point where a staff member believes a student may benefit from additional provision or intervention.

The process of referral is structured with a standard referral form (see Appendix 5), although the type of need being referred will vary widely. All relevant information about the student is considered and, where appropriate, additional assessments may be commissioned. Assessments that support referral may be as simple as a written assessment to measure handwriting speed or could involve observation of the student in lessons or assessment by an outside agent such as a Speech and Language Therapist, an Occupational Therapist or an Educational Psychologist. Any assessment outside any standard school assessments must first be agreed to by parents (a phone call may be sufficient). In most cases external assessment will require that parents pay for this privately (unless NEPS undertakes to conduct it) and they then may share that information with the school.

The AEN co-ordinator will systematically review all referrals and make one of the following decisions:

1. Refer the student back to the teacher(s) involved with advice about how to manage his needs within the classroom context.
2. Seek additional evidence of need before referring back to the teacher or moving on to providing a plan for the student.

#### **Stage 2: Plan**

When a student has been referred for additional educational support, the learning support team will consider what provision might help to address the student's difficulties and when and how this can be provided.

The exact difficulty or learning gap which is to be addressed and the nature of the provision to be made are recorded on a written IEP for each student.

Where possible, clear success criteria are established and recorded.

The student and his parents/ guardians should be involved at some level in the planning of the intervention or additional provision.

Parental contact depends on the significance of the intervention in terms of how serious the need is. For students with identified resource hours provided by NCSE, their parents will be met each year. Where an intervention will require a change to a student's curriculum in the short term then parents/ carers should be informed and should normally be involved in the decision about what kind of provision will be most effective. Where a long term change is being made then all stakeholders should be properly informed and consulted before a decision is made.

Students with special talents are included in the AEN plan. Support for such students is usually by way of (a) encouraged involvement in school extra-curricular activity – e.g. clubs such as music, debating, coding (b) individual class teachers providing additional work in subjects.

#### **Stage 3: Do**

Where possible, a "pre" measurement of performance in the identified area (literacy / numeracy / cognition / handwriting/ personal development skills / communication skills / social skills etc.) is conducted before any intervention is made.

Then the intervention or additional provision is made, and progress against the agreed success criteria is reviewed. This review will require regular communication between the resource teacher

and the AEN coordinator. If success is achieved then the student can be removed from the provision as appropriate or moved on to other provision.

Where possible, a “post” measurement of performance or evaluation is conducted.

#### Stage 4: Review

Comparisons between the pre and post measurements, and student’s subjective assessments of the effectiveness of the intervention should be reviewed, leading to a reassessment of student needs and the evolution of the plan or the devising of a new plan.

### The organisation of learning support in Rockbrook

The school operates a mixed model of learning support which is evolving in response to staff learning and student needs. Methods of support include

- **Individual withdrawal from a class:** this is generally avoided but can work with students who wish to get resource support during a time allocated to one of their low priority subjects e.g. during Great Books. It is also occasionally used to reduce the workload of a junior student, for example, by dropping a subject which is causing great difficulty and providing a resource class during that time.
- **Small group withdrawal:** works where students have a subject exemption (e.g. in a language), and they can get an additional resource class instead. Such support may also be provided to students who are not formally included on AEN list e.g. the provision of additional English classes to students for whom English is not their first language; provision of additional classes to a small group who could be described either as needing additional support or very advanced in a particular subject.
- **One-to-one support or small group support:** provided by a resource teacher in a key subject or personal development area, during a time when the student does not have a class (e.g. Irish exemption in junior years, free class period in senior years)
- **Timetable reduction:** students with additional needs who are experiencing work overload may require a reduced class timetable on site, with more time available during the school-day to do homework, and be supported in this task or to take time out (sport, extra-curricular). This support is usually provided by SNAs. Occasionally parents can become involved in providing this support.
- **Support within the classroom:** SNAs provide support to individual students in the classroom context. Occasionally this support can also be provided by a resource teacher via a team-teaching strategy.

### Supporting students and their families

#### Contacting school

Students on the school’s AEN register and their families are supported by the learning support team. This provides an additional layer of pastoral support and route for communication in addition to that provided by the mentoring system or the school’s administrative and pastoral structure. Parents are encouraged to contact the school if for any reason they have a concern. All parents of students with SEN and many parents of children on the AEN register are consulted at the beginning of the school year with regard to their children’s needs.

#### Admissions

The admissions policy is based on criteria that are designed to involve parents as much as possible in the choice of school for their child. Parents of children with AEN are asked to discuss any educational needs at interview stage. They are asked to provide all supporting documentation at the enrolment stage.

### Access arrangements for examinations (RACE)

A small number of students experience difficulties which could affect their ability to access examinations and assessments.

These students are identified through the AEN register. They are assessed as required by SEC / DES to provide evidence for eligibility for reasonable accommodation. The interpretation of evidence and the decisions based on it on this lies ultimately with the SEC.

Insofar as possible, students likely to be granted reasonable accommodation in exams will also be accommodated in whole school exams in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year, and if possible or essential, in other years. Where possible, the scribes/ readers for the state exams will provide that service during the mock examinations.

The guidance counsellor provides support for students with SEN seeking access to third-level colleges (e.g. with HEAR/DEAR applications).

### Liaison with outside agencies

Specialists from within the school and from external agencies are asked for advice as and when necessary to further identify a student's needs. Some of this external support may be cost free (e.g. provision by National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)). Any costs arising from contact with external agencies must be borne by the parents. In such cases the school may help in establishing the links and will then leave the family to deal directly with the specialists involved.

If the school is unable to meet the needs of a student within existing provision the AEN coordinator will seek advice about how the student's needs can best be met.

### Supporting students at school with medical conditions

The school recognises that students at school with medical conditions should be properly supported so that they have full access to education.

The school may have SNA support who will then work alongside the student, parents/guardians and the learning support team to address a student's needs in relation to accessing a full curriculum.

The school will not normally involve itself in the administration of medicines to students. Any such support, should it be given, requires prior approval of school management.

## Diagnosis

School staff never diagnose medical or mental health conditions. Where diagnosis of such conditions has been made by a suitably qualified professional we will make use of this information in guiding how we best accommodate a student's needs.

## Monitoring and evaluation of additional educational needs support

Student and parental feedback is gathered via an annual questionnaire and informally on an ongoing basis.

## Data Protection

All data related to AEN are kept in individual personal paper files maintained for that purpose. These files are normally accessible to the school management team and AEN coordinator. Class teachers or resource teachers may access these learning support files by verbal request to the AEN coordinator. Personal mentors may also have access to a mentee's file.

A summary of the content of these files is circulated to all staff before the end of September each year.

For many students the file will contain an IEP. All relevant staff are encouraged to view IEPs as required.

All examination results and standardised tests results are available to all staff in the staffroom. This AEN data may be stored for two years after the departure of a student. Data on potential entrants to the school who do not follow through is maintained for a maximum of eighteen months after the due date of entry.

## Training and resources

### Funding

Funding for students with SEN is provided by way of teaching resource hours allocated to the school by NCSE. The method of allocation has changed in 2017/18 and is now provided to the school on a whole-school rather than an individual student basis.

Due, among other things, to the additional administration work involved, a school often has to put more resources into provision for students with AEN than it receives. The school has a duty to provide value for money so efficiency and effectiveness are both important in deciding what provision should be made for students.

### Training for those providing learning support

The professional development of those providing learning support makes a significant difference to their effectiveness with our students.

CPD is provided for all teachers providing learning support and time is made for this by withdrawing staff from their duties at times when it will least affect the students they support. This involves helping staff understand the specific needs of each student and directing them to appropriate resources.

- Where possible members of staff are encouraged to develop specialised skills which support them in their particular role; CPD is a professional responsibility of all staff
- The leadership provided by teachers in the classroom is also highly significant in maximising the effectiveness of teachers providing resource support. These teachers can also make effective use of SNA support through the provision of useful advice.
- Staff are encouraged to seek CPD, in particular where it can be of help to students with AEN.

## Supporting classroom teachers in meeting the needs of students with AEN

Teachers involved in learning support share strategies with each other in identifying and supporting vulnerable students. These teachers provide CPD for classroom teachers by contributing to staff meetings and staff days.

The additional needs coordinator together with the principal will deploy SNAs appropriately and will support them through regular meetings and through feedback received from classroom teachers.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### AEN Coordinator

The school's AEN coordinator is directly responsible to the school management. Together the AEN coordinator and the school principal form the backbone of the learning support team. The AEN coordinator's role is to ensure that the additional educational needs for students are identified and catered for within the allocated resources; to manage the transition of vulnerable students into the school, to work with the examinations secretary to ensure standardised test results are available and that reasonable accommodation is provided where possible in exams, to liaise with the school guidance counsellor around RACE, HEAR & DARE; to provide resource teachers with appropriate information on all students, to liaise regularly with resource teachers and SNA, to maintain AEN files, to coordinate the learning support team and to liaise with all staff and parents around the AEN of students.

### AEN support

The learning support team draws on the expertise of the school guidance counsellor especially with regard to exam provision and post-school advice for students. The team also draws on the expertise of mentors as appropriate, including one mentor who is an educational psychologist.

### Resource teachers

Resource teachers provide additional teaching support for students with needs, for example, such as dyslexia or students on the autistic spectrum. This work may be done on a one-to-one basis, or in small groups or through team teaching. Occasionally it is carried out in an extra-curricular environment.

### Special Needs Assistants

Special needs assistants are responsible for assisting students in their daily school needs. They can help students to think and explain their thinking. They are well positioned to help students to understand the feedback that teachers have given and help to ensure that students respond to it. They prompt students to listen to and follow teachers' instructions and are careful to avoid becoming an unwitting barrier to learning by dominating the student's attention or restricting the communication between teacher and student. SNAs always seek to maximise students' independence: they are doing their job most effectively when the student is moving rapidly towards needing less assistance.

### Parents

Parent support for AEN is a vital component in good provision. Parents are required to provide all relevant information in a timely manner (e.g. any educational reports should be provided at application stage and certainly by enrolment stage. All parents should attend the Induction Day at the beginning of first year. Parents with children with identified SEN should meet with the AEN coordinator or the principal by appointment during the first month of the year to provide input into the IEP. Parents are usually expected to attend at least two relevant parent education sessions and two parent-teacher meetings each year. Parents are also requested to meet the student's mentor

at least twice per year. Parents of senior students with AEN are requested to meet the guidance counsellor to discuss issues around RACE and DARE. Parents of students with AEN are requested to complete a questionnaire at year end.

#### The designated teacher with specific child protection responsibility

This is the principal. In the absence of the principal, child safeguarding concerns should be communicated directly to the deputy principal.

### Accessibility

The school seeks to provide physical access to all parts of school for all students, visitors and staff. All classrooms and other learning spaces are accessible to users of wheelchairs.

### Dealing with Complaints

Parents/ carers, colleagues, students or other stakeholders with concerns or complaints should find that all members of staff listen to their concerns and respond reasonably. In the case of concerns relating to the school's AEN provision the best person to contact in the first instance will be the additional needs coordinator.

### Bullying

Bullying is taken very seriously at Rockbrook Park School and the possibility of vulnerable students becoming victims of bullying is recognised. As part of their responsibilities all staff are vigilant to detect any possibility of students with additional educational needs becoming victims of bullying.

We seek to minimise the risk by

- Establishing and maintaining a culture in which everyone is of equal value and mutual respect is paramount
- Communicating (through the School Journal and Parents Handbook) and enforcing clear rules about behaviour that all are expected to follow
- The effective induction of new students
- The provision of a personal mentor, who, with students who are vulnerable or less confident, will advise them on social rules and human relationships
- Monitoring closely, via normal supervision arrangements as well as SNA involvement, students who are identified as being particularly at risk during unstructured parts of the school day, whilst not restricting their opportunities for social interaction

Students or their families or friends who believe that bullying is taking place can report it to the any form-master or the deputy principal.

*Adopted by Board of Management Rockbrook Park School, July 2017*