



# ALEXANDRA COLLEGE DUBLIN

## Alexandra College Junior School Learning Support Policy

### **Aims/Objectives**

The Junior School's aim of learning support is to optimize the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties to:

1. Achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy during their years at primary school.
2. Develop positive self-esteem.
3. Develop a positive attitude about school and learning.
4. Provide supplementary teaching and additional support and resources for these pupils in English and/or Mathematics.
5. Involve parents – (through effective parent / teacher liaison) in taking an active role in the child's education.
6. Establish early intervention programmes for the diagnosis of learning difficulties.
7. Support pupils with low achievement and or learning difficulties through a team approach that involves the pupils themselves, their teachers, parents and relevant support personnel.
8. To provide learning support programmes for children who are performing at or below the 10th percentile on nationally standardized tests in English reading and / or Mathematics.
9. To develop and implement an individual learning programmes for each pupil in receipt of supplementary teaching based on an assessment of needs and a specification of learning targets for the pupil.

### **Beliefs and Principles**

It is our belief that each child is unique and each child brings a unique set of characteristics both strengths and weaknesses to any learning situation.

It is our belief that praise should be public and "problem solving" should be private.

It is our belief that all children should feel secure within the parameters of their classroom, knowing precisely what is expected of them academically and behaviorally.

It is our belief that we must network with other professionals and that is vital to involve and inform parents- they deserve our support and understanding.

We will look beyond her linguistic and mathematical intelligence and remember that each child has, (as Howard Gardner described in his Theory of Multiple Intelligence's), at least 3 or more of the following:

1. Factual Intelligence.
2. Analytic Intelligence (ability to reason).
3. Numerate Intelligence.
4. Linguistic Intelligence.
5. Spatial Intelligence (Artists, Entrepreneurs, System Analysts)
6. Athletic Intelligence.
7. Intuitive Intelligence (Aptitude for sensing and seeing that which is not always obvious.)
8. Emotional Intelligence – self-awareness, self-control, persistence, zeal.
9. Practical Intelligence – Plain common sense.
10. Interpersonal Intelligence (Social and leadership skills).
11. Musical Intelligence.

### **Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

The Junior School Head with the support, and in consultation with the school staff, shall develop and implement the school policies on learning support and special needs.

1. Shall work with teachers and parents.
2. Shall monitor the implementations of the school plan on learning support.
3. Monitor the selection of pupils.
4. Consult with teachers on how they can contribute to the implementation of the school plan on learning support.
5. Shall oversee the planning by teachers of individual profile and learning programme for each pupil receiving supplementary teaching.
6. Shall encourage professional development of class teachers so that they are better equipped to identify characteristics and effects of general and specific learning difficulties/disabilities, and that class teachers are aware of the support services available.
7. Shall facilitate communication between class teachers/parents of pupils in receipt of supplementary teaching and the learning support teacher.

### **Role of Class Teacher**

The class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress of all pupils in her class:

- Should bring his/her concerns about a particular child to the attention of the Learning Support Teacher.
- Should contribute to developing the Individual Profile and Learning Programme with the Learning Support teacher with activities designed to attain those targets.
- Shall consult with parents and develop strong links between the learning activities of pupils at home and at school.
- Shall implement the school policies on screening and selecting pupils for supplementary teaching in English and in Mathematics by administering and doing

- appropriate standardized tests i.e. Drumcondra Test to be administered to all pupils from J2-J6 in the month of May
- Shall differentiate the class curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of all the pupils and shall provide learning activities, which are suitably challenging and which also ensure success and progress.
  - Liaise with Learning Support Teacher on a regular basis regarding the pupil's progress.
  - Review the pupil's progress at the end of an instructional term with Learning Support.
  - Make parents aware of the concerns of the school about their child's progress.
  - Seek the approval of parents to proceed with further testing.
  - Set up initial meetings with Learning Support Teacher and parents.

If supplementary teaching is being reduced or discounted the class teacher shall inform parents of particular arrangements in the mainstream classroom that will continue to support the child's learning needs.

### **Role of Learning Support Teacher**

The Learning Support Teacher shall assist in developing and implementing an I.P.L.P. for each pupil who is selected for supplementary teaching in consultation with class teacher and parent, other duties include:

- Maintaining and planning a record for each individual or group of pupils in Learning Support.
- Coordinating the implementation of whole school procedures for the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching in line with that specified in the school plan on learning support i.e. Time for testing and frequency of testing.
- Consulting with the Junior School Head regarding the purchase of learning resources books and materials.
- Liaise with Learning Support Teacher on a regular basis regarding the pupil's progress.
- Liaise with class teachers at least once each term: such areas as approaches to language development reading, writing, penmanship and mathematics.
- Discussing outcomes of diagnostic assessment to the relevant parties and based on the outcomes of diagnostic screening to develop I.P.L.P in consulting with class teacher.
- Identifying children who may have general or specific learning difficulties.
- To meet with parents to discuss the outcome of screening and the actions to be taken by the school to meet the targets of the I.P.L.P and also to discuss ways in which the pupils learning can be supported at home.  
Meet with individual parents when necessary to review targets and progress.
- Consult with parents, class teacher when supplementary teaching is being discontinued.

## **Prevention Strategies**

Learning difficulties can be prevented or at least alleviated by implementing appropriate whole school programme in English and Maths – the following strategies to be included in the whole school plan:

- A)** Development of agreed approaches to language development.
- B)** Providing additional support in language development and in relevant early literacy and numerical skills to people who need it.
- C)** Ongoing structured observations and assessment of the language, literacy and numerical skills of pupils in Junior and Senior Infants to facilitate early identification of possible learning difficulties.

## **Whole School Strategies in Literacy Skills in English**

- 1) Developing Emergent Literacy Skills i.e. page, letter, word, sentence, left to right directionality, links between pictures and words.
- 2) Developing Phonemic Awareness.
- 3) Developing word Identification Skills i.e. sight vocabulary and Phonemic awareness.
- 4) Teach the essentials of grammar.
- 5) Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies.

Teach planning techniques for creative writing and project work

- 6) Linking Reading and Writing and to encourage children to:

Draft/Revisit/Edit.

- 7) Providing well stocked class libraries
- 8) Encouraging D.E.A.R. time set aside 15 minutes per week where we drop everything and Read."
- 9) We shall empower our emerging readers by offering them freedom of choice.
- 10) We will encourage reluctant readers and provide them with high interest low level text.

## **Types of Supplementary Teaching Early Intervention Strategies**

Research evidence indicates that the implementation of an intensive early intervention program in the early years i.e. KG Upper to J2, is an effective response to meeting the needs of children who experience low achievement and or learning difficulties.

- A) Programmes should be set within a specific time frame such as instructional term.
- B) They are based on shared expectations of success by all involved.
- C) They involve small groups teaching or one-to-one teaching.
- D) They involve a strong focus on the development of oral language and comprehension skills.
- E) They emphasis the development of phonemic awareness and a range of other identification skills.
- F) Engage pupils in frequent supervised reading at appropriate levels of difficulty and monitor their comprehension of the text.
- G) Programmes that integrate listening, speaking, reading and language.
- H) Programmes that incorporate a range of age appropriate number skills.