

Student Support Plan Policy

School of the Holy Spirit

Introduction:

In 2024, in light of current best practice and trends in education, it was decided to rename Individual Education Plans as Student Support Plans.

We feel that this title best explains the current support process in place for our students as we target the areas which are an obstacle to learning. Our approach addresses sensory, regulation, emotional and other challenges which hinder our students in reaching their full potential and target these areas for improvement. It also allows our school to track each student's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It enables us to document progress and needs over time and it assists us to provide appropriate levels of support to students in line with their current needs.

Context (We use the term IEP here as it was specific to the time)

Developing Individual Education Plans has long been recognised and practiced in our school as the most effective way to meet the assessed needs of each of our students. It also provides information and develops an awareness of the students' needs that is useful and useable by all staff. Engaging in the process of developing the IEP in a collaborative way with parents, the student, the school and other professionals ensures the quality and effectiveness of the plan. In 2014-2017 Elizabeth Charles, Senior Educational Psychologist with NEPS delivered training to all School of the Holy Spirit teachers on the IEP process. In so doing, it was believed that strengthening and developing teachers' knowledge and practice of IEPs, with her support, was the most effective way to consistently deliver IEPs that are collaborative, focused, realistic, functional, living and reflect everyday practice.

Three in-service training sessions covered:

- The purpose of IEP's
- Staff member's goals re IEP process 🎬
- Gathering information - getting a baseline
- Screening/Testing
- The learning relationship - task, teaching and learner
- Using the Cognitive Abilities Profile
- Working memory and acquisition of skill isn't enough, needs to be maintained, generalised and adopted in a specific situation when needed
- Gathering information about behaviour, social and emotional needs - the problem-solving approach and functional analysis
- Learning profiles
- Writing targets - long-term objectives and short-term objectives
- SMART targets
- Monitoring and recording
- The IEP process in the school
- Elizabeth held IEP clinics in November each year with teachers in school to discuss the needs of individual students and towards drawing up goals and targets for the coming year 2015 - 2019.

Rationale:

Planning for individual learning needs has been a feature of special educational provision for some time. The requirement to develop formalised IEPs is an essential component of the EPSEN Act 2004.

Aims:

- To be an individual and detailed plan of action for each student
- To make the best use of assessments
- To provide an opportunity to share information
- To establish priorities for learning
- To clarify expectations
- To engage parents
- To motivate students
- To document success and record progress
- To make use of programmes, activities and materials which are available
- To facilitate review
- To be a working, living document subject to change and alteration as necessary

SSPs are written by the beginning of December each school year. Once completed, the goals and target sheets are sent to parents for final consideration. Parents then have two weeks in which to read and ask for clarification/review of the targets set, if they want to. The final document is then drafted and finalised by mid-December. Annual review of SSP targets is in the following June of the same school year.

Stages of developing an SSP: (See SSP - Term 1- Time-table)

1. Information gathering - September.
2. Input of relevant stakeholders - October.
3. Determine the student's strengths and needs based on information gathered, input, assessments and observations - early November.
4. Prioritise learning needs - mid November.
5. Set goals and targets for the duration of the SSP - late November.
6. Each teacher to have the opportunity to liaise with Deputy Principal (Primary teachers) and Principal (Secondary teachers) around setting goals and targets in scheduled SSP meetings - early December.
7. SSP document sent to parents who read, sign and return to school. Teacher signs and gives copy to parents - mid December. Work on targets begins and progress monitored.

1.Information Gathering

The SSP process begins each year in September with the teacher getting to know each student in his/her class, and making informal observations on him/her. The handover meeting which happened in June of the previous school year is an important fact-finding conversation between teachers also. Curriculum levels, work and books covered, learning styles, social and emotional regulation and student resilience is discussed together with general and family information which may be of relevance to the student's daily life in school (See Handover document). Teacher reads the Psychological assessment, paying particular attention to its recommendations, as well as any assessments carried out by other professionals e.g. O.T., S.L.T., Sensory Integration Therapist. Teacher

may carry out specific assessments at this stage towards building a holistic picture of the student and his/her needs e.g. Learning Styles Checklist, Behaviour Audit, CAP, Matrix of Behaviours, Risk Assessment, other. He/she will also take previous assessments such as Micra T/Sigma T's, previous year's Summer Report, Halloween Assessments and Vocabulary Tests into account.

2. **Input of Stakeholders** Every parent is requested to fill out a 'Parent's Form' towards developing an SSP. The information required is current, covering areas of strength and interest, challenges, medical issues and current concerns. Students produce a current document which relays relevant information from their perspective. SNAs, as part of this important role in the student's school life, submit their observations of the student and finally the teacher writes a comprehensive observation of the student since he/she came into the class.

3. **Strengths and Needs** The teacher, using all the documents, assessments and observations of the student, then condenses the information into a list of current strengths and needs.

4. **Priority Learning Needs** The teacher, using his/her professional judgement and in collaboration with parents at the Parent/Teacher meeting, prioritises areas of learning for the rest of the school year. These may be in areas of regulation, personal and social development and self-help skills, cognitive development and access to the curriculum.

5. **Goals and Target Sheets** An SSP school template is completed at this stage by the teacher. It states the goal to be worked on with Smart targets within this goal area to be achieved within a given timeframe. The target sheet also specifies how these targets will be taught, by whom and the methods and resources that will be used to support learning. It also details how parents may help monitoring arrangements and review dates. The SSP is recognised as a working document which can be modified as required. Amendments can be written and dated. Sometimes a strategy will need to be changed, at other times the target

will quickly be achieved and a further target will be needed so that the momentum of progress is sustained. It will be noted and dated in the SSP when targets have been achieved.

The school has developed a system of tailor-made timetables, forms and templates on which to write the SSP (see attached templates). Time in school and Croke Park hours are also allotted each year to support teachers in their preparation. The Deputy Principal oversees the SSP process each year, making necessary amendments and ensuring teachers have the current dated templates needed. Any issues teachers have may also be brought to school leadership.

SSPs are uploaded to the student's file online to enable each teacher of the student to access the previous documents as they write the current SSP.

Success Criteria

1. The framework for preparation and implementation of SSPs (EPSEN) was followed.
2. There was collaboration between all stakeholders.
3. Everyone involved with the student is aware of their role in the SSP.
4. The strategies and methodologies used were effective.
5. The student progressed at a level commensurate with his/her ability.

Implementation and Review

This Policy was written in November 2020 and is to be read as part of the model of whole school development and support from NEPs.

It was reviewed in March 2025.

References

- A Rough Guide to Individual Educational Planning (IEPs), Mary Nugent, Senior Educational Psychologist, NEPS (June 2005).
- The Individualised Education Plan/NCSE, <https://www.sess.ie/dyslexiasection/individualised-education-plan>
- 'Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process', NCSE (2006).

Signed: _____ Date: _____