



Holy Family Senior National School

River Valley, Swords, Co. Dublin.

Reading Classes Policy

The Reading Classes in Holy Family S.N.S. were established in September 2000 in response to a need to support students with S.L.D. (Specific Learning Disability- Dyslexia) within our own school community. Prior to this, students who qualified for intervention were placed in Reading Classes outside of our school. Children with milder forms of dyslexia are supported in accordance with circular 0013/2017- Special Education Teaching Allocation.

Initially, one S.L.D. class was established and supported with children ranging from 3rd to 6th Class. The following year, a second class was established. There are currently two classroom teachers, with a pupil to teacher ratio of 9:1. It is our policy that children are integrated within the wider school community as much as possible, particularly in activities such as playtime, swimming, educational tours, sports coaching and other organised whole-school activities. Where possible children are integrated into mainstream classes (known as base classes) for several 50/55 minute lessons weekly for other curricular subjects to facilitate re-entry into mainstream on completion of the two years in the S.L.D. Class.

Rationale

It was considered necessary to devise a policy in order to formalise existing practice and procedures which have evolved since the establishment of the Reading Classes.

Aims

Please refer to school's S.E.N. Policy.

To optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with specific learning difficulties to achieve their potential in literacy skills before re-entering mainstream classes by:

- Providing a one/two-year intensive literacy programme designed to support children, developing their reading skills.
- Enabling children to understand their learning strengths and difficulties and to develop strategies to deal with these.
- Providing a grounding in language/assistive technology/computer/word processing/numeracy skills which will support them in the future.
- Developing self-esteem in children.

All of the above aims to be achieved in consultation with:

- Parents/ Guardians
- Reading Class Teachers
- Base Class Teachers
- Principal and Deputy Principal

- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Department of Education and Science
- Health Service Executive (HSE)

The Application Process

Our classes cater for children from 3rd to 6th Class with a diagnosis of dyslexia who have average or above average intelligence and are identified as being on the 2nd percentile or lower in terms of key aspects of literacy (Word Reading, Pseudoword Decoding/Phonics, Comprehension, Spelling). Students who meet these criteria may apply for a place on our two-year intensive support programme. This information must be contained in the Educational Psychologists' Report.

- Parents or guardians write a letter to the Deputy Principal requesting a place for their child, accompanied by an application form which is available online or from the school secretary. A copy of the Educational Psychologist's Report which diagnoses dyslexia and the end of year school reports for the last two years must be included with the application letter. The Educational Psychologist's report should state that it is recommended that the pupil attend an S.L.D. Unit/ Class in order to give them the required support.
- All reports e.g. speech and language reports, occupational therapy reports and psychological reports should be included with the application letter. A letter giving permission to contact child's previous school should also be included.

- In the case of co-occurring diagnoses dyslexia should be the student's primary need.
- Applications will be examined by the School Principal/Deputy Principal and The Board of Management.
- Students will initially be offered up to a four week placement to assess if our Reading Class will meet their needs appropriately. If placement is suitable the student will then be offered a place for up to two years. The need for continued enrolment will be reviewed towards the end of the first year. In the case of the placement not being suitable, students from Holy Family SNS will be offered a place in one of our mainstream classes or in the case of students from other schools they will return to their original school.
- Parents will be notified by the Deputy Principal as to whether their application has been successful or unsuccessful.
- The application will then be forwarded to the NCSE for approval.
- If the pupil meets the criteria they will be invited to view the school along with their parent(s)/ guardian(s) to discuss enrolment and view the two Reading Classes to gain an understanding of the programme. Students may also be invited for an individual literacy assessment in June.
- Travel application will be made if necessary. Travel applications can be made for students accepting a place in their nearest S.L.D. Class to their home address. Once travel arrangements are in place the parents/guardians are responsible for communication with driver. It is up to the parents/guardians to notify the driver of any change to pick up/drop off arrangements. Contact details must be exchanged with driver at the beginning of the school year. Details regarding School Transport for children with Special Educational Needs are available on Education.ie under School Transport Section.

- A high level of cooperation and positive work ethic is required by both pupil and parents/ guardians. Holy Family SNS also has a duty of care and responsibility for the safety and learning of all children in The Reading Classes. Please refer to the school's Discipline for Learning and Behaviour Policy. If behavioural issues become evident parents will be invited to a review meeting with the Deputy Principal on a termly basis.

Gaeilge

Children with a S.L.D. may receive an exemption from the study of Irish, as laid out in the Department of Education Circular 52/2019. An Irish Exemption can be applied for in Holy Family S.N.S. once a place has officially been granted, if the child hasn't been granted an exemption from their previous school. If an exemption has been granted to a student by their previous school please include this with your application.

Attendance

The Reading Class uses a structured reading programme that needs to be followed in sequential order to maximise success and learning for the children. For this reason, it is essential that good attendance is maintained throughout the year as places for the Reading Class are in high demand. Any extended periods of non-attendance will require a meeting between parents/guardians and the class teacher. The Principal is obliged, under the Education Welfare Act to report students who are absent for twenty days or more.

Communication

Parental involvement in their child's education is essential. Meetings with parents will be arranged initially in September/October to discuss the Support Plan. Review meetings will then be arranged in the second or third term. Meetings will take approximately one hour and will take place before or after school. Base Class teachers will attend if appropriate. Parents/ Guardians can communicate via the Homework Journal and by email.

Support Plans

An individualised approach to assessment, planning, teaching and record-keeping is implemented in line with NEPS Continuum of Support. Students in special classes have a detailed support plan setting out clear goals and strategies to meet their diverse needs. Support plans address students' needs in some or all of the following areas, as appropriate to the student.

Learning

Social and Communication Skills

Emotional Health

Behaviour

Life Skills, including independence

Care

Adaptation of physical environment

Students' progress is kept under regular review

Staff Development

The Board of Management of Holy Family SNS encourages special class teachers to engage in appropriate learning opportunities to ensure they have the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to be a special class teacher.

Accommodation

The school ensures where possible that the special classroom(s) is centrally positioned in the school with sufficient space to accommodate computer work stations and other specialised furniture and equipment. The physical location of the classroom facilitates inclusion, reduces segregation of students and isolation of teaching staff.

Curriculum

The full range of subjects as outlined in the Curriculum for Primary Schools, is taught to the students. However, special emphasis is placed on the teaching of reading, writing and spelling as well as the development of good oral language skills. The students spend approximately two hours each day on these subjects.

Wilson Reading System

The Wilson Reading System is being taught in our Reading Classes since September 2018. It is a structured literacy program based on

phonological-coding research and Orton-Gillingham principles. WRS directly and systematically teaches the structure of the English language. Instruction is direct, multisensory and interactive. Through the programme, students learn fluent decoding and encoding skills to the level of mastery. It uses criterion-based assessments built into the program to measure student progress and success.

The overriding goal of the Wilson Reading System is to have students read independently with ease and understanding. The instructional goals are to develop:

Accurate and speedy word recognition

Spelling and proofreading proficiency

Increased vocabulary, background knowledge and listening comprehension skills

Fluency with an emphasis on expression and meaning

Independent silent reading skills with narrative and informational text.

Regular assessments inform planning and identify the needs of all pupils in the Reading Class.

Maths

Students will have a maths assessment at the beginning of their placement in the Reading Class. Following this they may attend their Base Class or one of the Reading Classes for Maths. They will be placed in a class which best meets their needs. This placement is assessed regularly and may change in consultation with students and parents/ guardians.

Preparation for Sacraments

Students in 6th Class can be prepared for the Sacrament of Confirmation in their Base Class/Reading Class.

Returning to a mainstream class

At the end of the two year placement students originally from Holy Family SNS will return to a mainstream class in Holy Family SNS. Students who have come from other schools will return to their former school. If they would like to stay in Holy Family S.N.S. parents/guardians should apply in writing stating the year they are applying for and class. As we have a waiting list for places, we may or may not be in a position to offer a place.

For students coming from a Gaelscoil one option would be to apply for a place in an English speaking school in a student's local area or alternatively to apply for a place in Holy Family S.N.S. These applications will be processed in line with the school's Admission Policy.

Ratification, Communication, Implementation and Review

A copy of the draft policy for the Reading Classes was made available to all members of staff, parents of students in the reading classes and to the Board of Management.

Ratified by the Board of Management on 18/2/2020

