



ST MARY'S SCHOOL MANSFIELD LEARNING DIVERSITY & SPECIAL NEEDS POLICY

Rationale:

St Mary's School supports the Horizons of Hope foundational statement in relation to Learning Diversity;

Educators seek to meet the needs of all learners, so that every student experiences success. While all educators have this goal, Catholic educators see each student as a sacred creation – 'made in the image of God' (Genesis 1:27, Horizons of Hope).

This is enacted through an inclusive pedagogy and commitment to uphold the right of all to be welcomed, valued, acknowledged and actively engaged in their education. St Mary's understands its ethical and legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate students with particular needs and disabilities (Refer to Disability Act 2006 and Disability Standards for Education 2005).

Definitions:

- **Impairment:** An abnormality of the body's structure, appearance or function which is caused by injury or illness.
- **Disability:** The loss of a particular bodily function or activity which results from an impairment.
- **Disabled student:** A student with a disability means a child impaired to an extent that this student's educational, physical, social or emotional progress necessitates the provision of special education and/or related services and resources.
- **Imputed Disability:** an 'imputed' disability is something that a professional believes another person has. To impute a disability, the school team must have reasonable grounds to make such a judgement.
- **Integration:** A process of increasing and maintaining the participation of students with impairments, or disabilities, or particular needs, in a significant proportion of the educational and social activities of the mainstream school in which their peers without disabilities/impairments/particular needs participate.
- **NCCD:** National Consistent Collection of Data is an annual collection of data by the Australian Federal government which results in funding to Victorian Catholic schools. The NCCD funding assists schools to implement programs, build upon resources and make adjustments/modifications to curriculum that improves the learning outcomes of all students, including those with additional learning needs to ensure entitlement.
- **Reasonable Adjustment:** A measure or action taken to assist students with particular needs (including disabilities) to participate in their education on the same basis as their peers.
- **Learning Support Officer (LSO):** Also known as teacher's aides/assistants. This person is employed by the school to undertake a range of tasks including primarily supporting teachers and students in a range of classroom activities but also personal hygiene support, and other academic support tasks, such as intervention programs supported by specialist teaching staff.

Aims:

- To provide equal access to the curriculum for all students.

Implementation:

Learning Diversity Leader

The role of a Learning Diversity Leader is to assist teachers to identify students who may be experiencing difficulties with their learning. The Learning Diversity Leader has access to a number of tools which assist in identifying these students (see Appendix A). A meeting with a parent/carer, known as a 'Program Support Group Meeting', may be called by either the Learning Diversity Leader, the teacher or the Principal/Assistant Principal, in order to discuss these needs and possible adjustments that may assist the student to access education on the same basis as their peers. Details regarding this meeting will follow.

It is also the role of the Learning Diversity Leader to investigate the options available to support the student which may include specific adjustments to the curriculum delivery, reporting, or assessment, direct Learning Support Officer support or any intervention that may be suitable in addressing the student's needs. For a list of interventions available within St Mary's please see Appendix B. Appendix C details the flowchart of intervention support that may be available to students with particular needs at St Mary's.

Program Support Group (PSG):

On the application for enrolment of a student with particular needs (impaired/disabled child or student with an imputed disability), the Principal will instruct the Learning Diversity Leader to establish a Program Support Group Team.

This may also need to be established at any stage of a child's educational journey at St Mary's once the student has been identified as meeting any of the four broad categories of disability. This may be through confirmed diagnosis or if a disability is imputed by teaching staff.

These Program Support Group members will consist of the principal and/or Learning Diversity Leader, a class teacher who will be responsible for the child in the school, a parent/carer, any relevant support service, and (where appropriate) a Learning Support Officer. The Principal and/or Learning Diversity leader, will enlist the support of staff or volunteers with special expertise and interest in matters related to learning support and integration.

St Mary's will utilise the Program Support Group meetings to determine the degree of adjustment that has been or may be provided to support student access and participation in their education.

Personal Learning Plans (PLP):

An PLP is a collaboratively written document which outlines a student's current level of ability and identifies specific goals for future attainment. PLP's ensure students with learning difficulties and disabilities have access to a meaningful and engaging curriculum suited to their particular needs.

PLP's build on a student's current level of learning and take into consideration a student's cultural, linguistic and social-economic background.

PLP's are written by teachers during and after a Program Support Group meeting with parents/carers, case workers, therapists, school counsellors and anyone else positively involved in the student's life. Where appropriate they will also involve the student.

PLPs will;

- Contain a meaningful educational program outlining specific, measurable goals (SMART) and strategies to best achieve these goals.
- Outline what the student can currently do.
- Be age and developmentally appropriate.
- Focus on strengths and potential.
- Clearly indicate actions and responsibilities.
- Be regularly reviewed.
- Outline how progress towards goals will be measured (evidence).

Identifying Students in need - Roles and Responsibilities

At St Mary's the Learning Diversity Leader will co-ordinate Program Support Group meetings and oversee Personal Learning plans which seek to;

- assess the daily educational requirements of the student and develop a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) to plan for and monitor any reasonable adjustments/modifications in place to support the student with particular needs. Reasonable adjustments will be made for students in consultation with the student, their parents/carers, their teachers and, if appropriate, other professional. N.B.

Our school may consult through Program Support Group meeting processes and in other less formal ways.

- assess the resources available in the school and to identify additional requirements for the student e.g. physical access to and around school. i.e. transport and mobility requirements, Learning Support Officers and training.
- To discuss and/or implement the funded support options provided through NCCD in order to implement programs/modifications that may improve the learning outcome of the student and provide additional access to education and support services.
- Identify the benefits of additional professional support including specialist staff such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, teachers of the deaf, interpreters or any additional equipment and aids.
- Advise staff and evaluate on a regular basis, the program being employed for the student.

Upon request by a parent for the enrolment of a disabled or student with particular needs, the PSG will consider all aspects of the request:

This would include:

- Discussion with the Parish Priest and/or CEM Eastern region.
- Formally notifying the staff of the request for enrolment and providing them with all relevant details.
- Determining the type of educational/supervisory program most appropriate to the needs of the student with particular reference to:
 - ❖ Hours of attendance
 - ❖ Placement
 - ❖ Locomotion
 - ❖ Toileting
 - ❖ Feeding
 - ❖ Medication
 - ❖ Behaviour Modification
 - ❖ Personality
 - ❖ Determining the skills, knowledge and strategies required by the staff in order to successfully implement the program
 - ❖ Determining the educational resources and facilities required to meet the needs of the student and
 - ❖ Determining whether the school can reasonably meet these requirements within its existing resources.

Partial Enrolment:

- It may be appropriate to arrange enrolment on a conditional and review basis.
- It is necessary to be aware that a student being integrated may take up to six months to operate effectively in a new environment.
- This includes the physical, intellectual, social, emotional and biological needs of the child. For example, the provisions of ramps and toilets for children with physical challenges, special learning materials and so on...
- Staff professional learning to be undertaken.
- Information and assistance concerning NCCD funding and other organisational and support matters may be obtained from the Learning Diversity Staff at the Catholic Education Office of Melbourne.

The school acknowledges the right of the parent to:

- Withdraw the request for the child's enrolment at any time and to request the reconvening of the PSG to assess the progress of the child at any time.

Factors for Consideration Before Enrolling a Student with Particular Needs (Disability or Imputed)

1. Class Size:

The relevance of this factor will depend on the type of disability of the child, degree of adjustment and the existing school organisation.

2. Staffing:

(a) Professional learning should be available for all staff members in order to increase their awareness of the nature of the student's particular disability, and develop a more informed attitude to the integration process. This should be a continuous and developing process.

(b) The **class teacher** likely to be responsible for the student should have an appropriate background of experience and a positive attitude to the particular integration program. If additional teaching skills and knowledge are required, in-servicing and on-going specialist support programs should be readily available.

(c) A contingency plan may be necessary in the event that the normal class teacher is absent and a **relieving teacher** is employed. This assumes that specialised knowledge and skills are required by the teacher of the disabled child. It may be possible to train other members of the staff (teachers and Learning Support Officers) for the purposes of program support. Suitably trained relieving/emergency teachers may also be available. It is possible that the parent may have sufficient expertise, and be free, to provide the necessary classroom support.

(d) A Learning Support Officer may be required when the student has a need for additional assistance in respect to his/her:

- Mobility (class room, playground, toilet, etc.)
- Personal hygiene (toileting, clothing, washing, etc.)
- Communication with others
- Classroom activities/access to the curriculum on the same basis as anyone else.

The extent of this assistance will depend on the nature and severity of the impairment, the type of student activity undertaken and the modifications/adjustments agreed to by all parties through PSG.

(e) The nature of the disability and prognosis - progressive or deteriorating illness/disability or life-threatening.

3. Physical Environment:

The importance of various aspects of the school's physical environment to the successful integration of the child will depend on his/her type of impairment or disability. However, the availability, accessibility and/or necessity of the following factors should also be considered: ramps, doorways, toilets/washrooms, withdrawal areas, recreation areas, student pick-up facilities, the school's communication system.

4. Educational Resources:

This will depend on the type and severity of the impairment/disability and reasonable adjustment required to meet the student's learning needs. The PSG should seek assistance in determining a list of essential and useful educational resources.

Evaluation of the Student's Progress and Placement:

- The Parent Support Group may be reconvened at the request of the parent, and/or
- The Learning Diversity Leader will co-ordinate regular PSGs to review the progress of the student to ensure the school is meeting the needs of this student.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed in February 2021 in accordance with the School Policy Timeline.

