

St. Nathy's School Policies - Effective: September 2010

CLASS STREAMING POLICY

In response to growing needs, our commitment to working with learning difficulties has increased considerably over the last few years with an ongoing upgrading of facilities as well as an expansion in the number of teaching hours from fully qualified teachers. An implementation of the various aspects of this policy is subject to ongoing review as well as to ongoing state and private funding.

1. STREAMING POLICY

First Years:

Apart from the Special Needs class group, First Year students are not streamed and are assigned to classes at random.

Information from Parents and Feeder National Schools: Many of the parents of incoming students provide us with information relevant to the development of the pupil e.g. sight, hearing, history of learning difficulties etc. This may include empowering us to make contact with the authorities in the Primary Schools. We especially welcome this information. In addition, many parents are willing to provide us with copies of professional psychological reports. These are valuable and many contain useful educational recommendations. Access to this information is entirely in accordance with the discretion and conditions of the parents.

On the basis of the information supplied by parents and feeder National Schools we select one class group of 8 – 10 pupils approximately for Special Needs assistance.

Second Years:

We aspire to have all classes in Second Year as honours classes. Students are allocated to class groupings which are appropriate for their rate of progress as has been determined by ongoing assessments in First Year and by final end of year Common Paper Summer Tests. During Second Year distinct Honours and Pass classes may emerge. This is facilitated by classes being timetabled in parallel.

Senior Cycle:

[Top](#) ↑ Students are allocated to class groupings in English, Irish & Maths which are appropriate for their rate of progress as has been determined by ongoing assessments during their first three years. Every effort is made to accommodate separate Honours and Pass classes in English, Irish & Mathematics.

2. SOURCES OF IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Information from Parents and Feeder National Schools: see above

Group Standardised Tests: During their first year in secondary school, all First Year students undergo continuous assessment as well as standardised ability testing in literacy and numeracy tests. This alerts us to the possible existence and scale of learning difficulties. Such learning difficulties may vary significantly from year to year. The information gathered is also useful in the structuring of the curriculum and the allocation of teaching resources for the following school year.

Subject Teachers: Teachers are instructed to observe the progress or difficulties of First Year pupils - particularly in Maths, English and Languages. Informal classroom assessment soon provides a rich source of information.

Individual Standardised Tests: Students suspected of being at risk of underachievement due to learning difficulties which have either not yet been discovered or not disclosed to the school may undergo individual tests e.g. C.A.T. (Cognitive Abilities Test), Drumcondra Reading Test etc., etc.. These tests are diagnostic and expose particular decoding and word attack deficits.

3. OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES

Withdrawal from subjects: If absolutely necessary, and only with the full approval of parents, pupils may give up certain subjects. We have found that pupils with general learning difficulties (as distinct from specific learning difficulties such as Dyslexia) find great difficulty with French and German – subjects which are compulsory for most First Years. We do not provide German for the Special Needs class. When French is timetabled for the Special Needs class we try to provide additional Special English classes at the same time to facilitate students who can not cope with another modern language.

Exemptions in Irish: With the agreement of the Department of Education & Science, and upon the recommendation of an Educational Psychologist, a student may get an exemption from studying Irish.

Only students with severe learning disabilities are allowed by the Department to give up Irish.

Every possible effort is made to provide additional class contact in English for students who have given up a subject because of attested learning difficulties. However, withdrawing from subjects (including Irish) may be ill-advised in the case of pupils with some learning difficulties (including Dyslexia) where exceptionally gifted pupils are experiencing reading and writing difficulties. Not having a continental language may also preclude entry into the traditional universities for example.

Arrangements for Public Examinations: Special arrangements can be sanctioned by the Department of Education and Science in both the conduct and assessment of public examinations. This may include having an attendant to read the questions, allowing the student the use of a tape recorder to answer questions and, in certain circumstances, greater tolerance in spelling and grammatical deficiency.

Information Technology: All pupils have access to computers in school. We are expanding our IT resources in the area of learning difficulties and our specialist teachers keep up-to-date on the latest software.

Whole School Approach: A whole school approach to student learning difficulties is encouraged. Subject teachers are encouraged to make special arrangements for the students involved in relation to the assignment of homework and also in relation to work and test assessments.

Pupil Teacher Ratio: Pupils with learning difficulty enjoy a low pupil / teacher ratio. In small groups they can receive a great deal of individual-centred rather than group- centred or subject-centred instruction. In some cases the pupil may have a one-to-one contact with a teacher.

Self Esteem: Finally, the school sets out to develop the full potential, social as well as academic, of each pupil. Staff are encouraged to give additional affirmation, where appropriate, to pupils with learning difficulties and encourage them to participate fully in the life of the school.