

Policy Statement on Pupil Support (Learning)

Aims

This policy provides a framework for a whole-school approach to support for learning at Portobello high School. It is intended for use by Senior Management, Subject Specialists, Guidance, Learning Support and Special Needs staff, Learning Assistants, Non-Teaching staff, and other professional / visiting services.

Each student at Portobello is regarded as unique, and deserves the opportunity to develop his / her potential to the maximum. Accordingly, the school strives to provide a curriculum which is appropriate to the needs of all students, and which is revised regularly in the light of all those needs. All of our students should, therefore, have access to a curriculum which is appropriate to the needs of all students, and which is revised regularly in the light of all those needs of all students should, therefore, have access to a curriculum:

- which is broad, balanced and progressive
- which embraces individual differences
- which enables students to work towards their potential
- which enables students to make informed choices about their own futures.

A shared approach to learning implies a whole-school commitment, and an understanding that all staff have a responsibility to meet the learning needs of individual students. Such learning needs should be addressed, for the most part, in mainstream classes, through the mainstream curriculum with the use of appropriate methodology.

In providing an appropriate curriculum, teachers and managers should take account of:

- school policies
- 5-14 curriculum framework
- Standard Grade
- Higher Still
- Working Together
- National and Local Authority policies.

Effective Support for Learning

At whole-school level there should be:

- clear targets in the School Improvement Plan relating to effective support of learning.
- opportunities for cross-curriculum matrix, offering appropriate choice, breadth, balance and progression for all students.
- time for staff development and curriculum development, to take account of local and national initiatives
- effective communication at each stage in the student's career
- time for consultation with students, teachers, parents and other agencies, as and when appropriate.
- a system of extended support which ensures that all who are involved in the student's education liaise and co-operate effectively.
- Links developed to promote integrated support (to include alternative Education and Guidance).

At departmental level there should be:

- A Departmental Improvement Plan which articulates with the School Improvement Plan.
- Clear targets concerning effective learning and teaching, which take account of the School Improvement Plan.
- Opportunities to share good practice with colleagues.
- Opportunities to discuss and implement strategies for effective learning and teaching
- Effective record keeping and communication
- Effective links with parents
- Effective links with external agencies

At teaching group level there should be:

- a variety of materials tasks and modes of assessment, to take account of individual student needs and learning styles
- Adequate support (via staffing, resources and methodology) to encourage success
- An environment which challenges students to be motivated yet disciplined
- Opportunities for students to be involved in the processes of target setting, review and evaluation of their own learning
- In some instances it will be appropriate for a student to follow an individual education Plan (IEP) to support a curriculum which differs significantly from that of the peer group. In such situations requisite subject specialist input will be negotiated through liaison with the PT LSSN.

Strategies for effective support for learning

The strategies outlined below may be applied by teachers alone, or in conjunction with support services. LSSN staff engaged in direct support may also use them.

Assessment

Self, peer and teacher assessment should be employed as part of the formative and summative approaches used.

Formal and informal modes of assessment should be used

Planning of Learning and Teaching

Consideration of differences in learning styles and learning pace of individual students should be central to the planning of learning and teaching. Likewise, teaching approaches, tasks, materials and resources should be developed to take account of the wide variety of student needs and learning styles.

Methodologies which encourage such learning and teaching:

- Should be flexible
- Should take account of existing knowledge and skills
- Should provide opportunities for individual, group and whole class activities
- Should allow students to apply skills and knowledge in relevant activities
- Should use additional support effectively
- Should match the task to the learner.

Recording Progress

Students should be made aware of the criteria used for recording progress

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Communication with Parents

Where Learning Support and special needs staff are working co-operatively with subject teachers, they should, when possible, share the tasks of reporting to and meeting parents.

Informal reporting may take place at the request of home or school, e.g. via Guidance or LSSN.

Parents should be afforded the opportunity to support their daughter's / son's learning in partnership with school.

The management of Support for learning

Management of support for learning across the whole school is crucial if the needs of students are to be met in the best possible way. Aspects to be managed include:

- Staffing and deployment of staff (includes Learning Assistants)
- Resources
- Accommodation
- Budgets
- Curriculum
- Links with external agencies
- Quality assurance
- The range of provision in school
- Staff roles and responsibilities
- Parental involvement
- Statutory procedures (e.g. annual reviews for Records of Need)

Where support for learning is well managed, and responsibilities should be clearly defined, so that staff may work together to ensure a consistent approach to assessment student support and effective learning and teaching.

Subject teachers

Subject teachers hold the main responsibility for education students, and for meeting special educational needs. They should expect and receive support from:

- Senior Management
- Promoted staff in departments
- Guidance staff
- Learning support and Special Needs teachers and Learning Assistants
- Specialist teachers (e.g. from the visiting Support Service teachers / EAL)
- Members of support services who comprise the extended support team.

Learning Assistants (formerly Special Needs Auxiliaries)

Learning Assistants have an extremely diverse role, and a wide generic job description. At Portobello High School, Learning Assistants are attached to the Learning Support Department as a result of the City of Edinburgh's Inclusion Policy, their numbers vary from one year to the next, depending on the level of need identified at authority moderation. They are valued as part of the LSSN team, and work primarily to support young people who have exceptional and complex physical or sensory needs. In Practice, they are frequently, though not exclusively, deployed in practical areas of the curriculum. Learning Assistants have to be flexible in their approach and able to support any young person if and when the need arises. They undertake additional training in aspects of special needs, and are experienced in dealing with many of the difficulties which young present in class. They are also trained to deliver *Toe by Toe*, and to read and scribe for examination candidates.

Learning Support and Special Needs

There are five recognised roles for LSSN specialists in the secondary school:

1. Co-operative Teaching (also known as Collaborative Teaching)

The Learning Support teacher supports the work of the class by:

- Providing direct support to students in teaching groups
- Assisting in the teaching of the group
- Developing classroom approaching with the subject teacher
- Assisting in recording and assessment
- Collaborating in curriculum development

2. Consultancy

Learning Support and Special Needs teachers provide a consultancy service to senior management and colleagues by advising on:

- Issues relating to the curriculum
- Learning needs of individual students (may involve testing / screening, e.g. for dyslexia)
- Resources and materials
- Learning and teaching approaches

3. Tutoring and Group Teaching (Direct Tuition)

Learning support teachers offer direct support by providing:

- Short – term programmes (e.g. To by Toe, Paired Reading, Keyboarding Skills)
- Tuition to support class work
- Support programmes in class or in LSSN Base to meet particular difficulties
- Timetabled support for students following reduced timetables, including Life Skills and Study Skills.
- Co-ordination, recording and management of IEP's
- Advice on appropriate use of ICT including keyboarding skills and Successmaker
- Testing for Special Assessment Arrangements for SQA.

4. Specialist Services

LSSN staff contribute to the provision of short term support for students in exceptional circumstances.

- Return to school after prolonged absence
- Transfer from another school
- Experiencing difficulty in coping with school life

At Portobello High School, we are fortunate in having Alternative Education provision, which complements, and sometimes assumes responsibility for aspects of the fourth role. Nonetheless, the specialist service role remains part of the LSSN remit, with the emphasis on learning needs, rather than emotional and behavioural needs.

5. Staff Development

Learning Support and special needs staff have cross curricular experience and an overview of students' learning. They can, therefore, participate in staff development through:

- Seminars and in-service courses
- Providing information to staff
- Consultation
- Involvement in cross-curricular working groups

Extended Support

The development of a system of extended support brings together staff from Management, Learning Support and special Needs, Guidance, Alternative Education and subject departments to develop the most effective ways of supporting learning. In order to be successful, a system of extended support should encourage:

- Clear communication to keep staff well informed
- A single referral system for support
- Flexibility in responding to student needs
- A focus effective learning and teaching
- Co-operative approaches to support learning needs
- A clear management structure for all support services
- A clear role for professionals and visiting services

Accommodation and Resources

Ideally, accommodation for the extended support team should be available for the Learning Support team, but could also be used for other purposes, e.g.:

- As a venue for meeting parents or visiting services
- As a venue for multidisciplinary meetings
- For teaching individuals or small groups
- As a resource centre for curriculum development work
- By other staff as part of support for learning provision
- By senior/more able students pursuing individual studies
- By students assisting peers eg in paired reading or *Toe by Toe* programmes

Additional provision (e.g. Alternative Education) continues to have separate accommodation and resources, although it is anticipated that ultimately, the school should plan for a locationally central position for all aspects of Integrated Support.

Resources should meet the range of activities offered, including:

- Materials and resources from all areas of the curriculum
- Special equipment, including ICT, for use throughout the school
- Appropriately adapted and differentiated resources to meet the needs of students who experience learning difficulties

Such materials should also be available in subject classrooms.