

# St Aidan's Learning Support Department Policy 2016 - 2017

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## Introduction

As a school we firmly believe that each child, regardless of academic or physical difficulties, has the right to take part in and enjoy every aspect of school life. As a department, we feel that our every day work supports this belief. Each student is an individual and when catering for each child's needs, individual personalities, strengths and preferences are taken into account as much as possible. The department can only achieve success by working in close partnership with parents, staff and students; therefore, it has an 'open door' policy whereby parents are welcome to arrange to come into school in order to discuss concerns / complaints at an early stage. At this early stage, concerns can usually be resolved by communicating with the relevant staff members. If the problem is more complex, it may be that a further meeting is arranged involving teaching staff, Heads of Year or outside agencies if appropriate.

The Learning Support department is based mainly around room LS1 and incorporates a purpose-built, fitted kitchen to help students with life skills. LS2 next door contains study cubicles for independent study or for students to work with a Teaching Assistant. Two additional classrooms have been built to accommodate students studying the foundation learning programme, an alternative curriculum for students who are unable to access the majority of mainstream lessons. However, all students in the foundation learning programme are expected to attend some practical mainstream lessons.



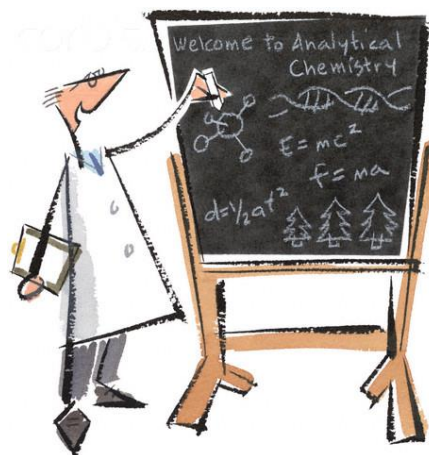
## 1. The Department

The department is made up of a combination of subject staff within the school who teach Learning Support groups as part of their overall timetable, specialist teachers who work with individuals or small groups of students and General Teaching Assistants (GTAs), Advanced Teaching Assistants (ATAs) and Foundation Tutors who support students both inside and outside of the classroom. This year the department is made up of the following staff:

Mrs J Rowland	Head of Learning Support/Teacher, specialist teacher for dyslexia, Annual Review meetings for Years 7 - 9 students
Miss M Chanter	SBAT/Teacher, specialist teacher for dyslexia, responsible for access arrangements in public examinations and Annual Review meetings for Years 10 and 11 and Sixth Form students

### Teaching Assistants

Mrs K Aldred	Miss K Lewis
Mrs J Ash	Mrs H MacArthur
Mrs C Barclay	Mrs L MacAulay
Miss M Beetles	Mr J Matthews
Mrs S Bloxham	Mrs P McCall
Mrs A Clark	Mrs H Munro
Mrs N Cloughton	Mr L Murdoch
Mrs S Falokun	Mrs P Neale
Mrs R Hall	Mrs J Newson
Miss P Hamey	Ms C Parnall
Mrs S Hinchcliffe	Mrs L Porter
Mrs C Holbrook	Mr L Ratcliffe
Mrs L Holmes	Mrs D Sanneh
Mrs J Johnson	Miss J Scott
Mrs S Kaiser	Mrs J Sidgwick
Mrs M Kinsley	Mrs J Walters
Miss E Lansdall	Mrs S Willcock
Miss M Leach	Mrs J Wood



The department is led by Mrs Rowland with the assistance of Miss Chanter. Miss Chanter's main responsibility is testing for access arrangements in public examinations.

In Years 7 and 8, a small number of students are withdrawn from classes in order to receive additional tuition. This support is either delivered to individual students or to very small groups, depending on particular circumstances. The groups may consist of students from different year groups. In Years 10 and 11, these students may receive support in preparing for GCSE examinations.

We also have a foundation learning programme for students with very low learning levels. These students are taught a more personalised programme in mixed-age classes.

Some students are in receipt of an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan are usually supported by a Teaching Assistant for some of their timetable.

The nature of support varies depending on the needs of the child; we discourage all Teaching Assistants from sitting next to students in the classroom and Teaching Assistants are very aware of the need to prevent students from becoming over-reliant on classroom helpers. To this effect, they have been given strategies to encourage students to become more independent. The long-term aim for all students, regardless of the nature of their difficulties, is to maximise their ability to work independently.



## 2. Identifying Needs

To ensure that we meet the needs of students coming into St Aidan's, we need to gather as much information as we can before and when they arrive. This is a detailed process which is broken down into stages:

- 1 Mrs Douglas (Head of Year 7) and myself attend Year 6 Annual Reviews held at feeder schools so we can judge what would be the best arrangements for each Statemented child coming into Year 7. We also have two Teaching Assistants who are responsible for co-ordinating transition programmes, which are individualised to suit the needs of each child.
- 2 While the students are still in Year 6, the school holds an information-gathering Parents' Evening, at which parents of all pupils about to enter Year 7 are given an appointment to talk through the individual details regarding their child. This includes information about any history of Special Educational Needs and any medical conditions. Any relevant information provided by parents on this evening with regard to Special Education Needs is passed on to teaching staff so teachers are aware of individual needs right at the start of the year.
- 3 Students visit the school for a full day prior to attending in Year 7. In some cases (where pupils do not know anyone else who will be going to St Aidan's) students attend for an extra half day. In addition, a small number of students who are going to need a high level of support may visit the school individually with their Teaching Assistant to receive a guided tour from a member of the Learning Support Department.
- 4 Within a fortnight of their arrival in September, all students are assessed on their reading, writing and mathematical skills. These tests are for screening purposes so the results are not generally disclosed to parents. However, parents are welcome to contact the school if they wish to know the results of the tests. For this assessment the following tests are used:

### **New Group Reading Test (NGRT)**

This is a reading comprehension test, which means the student has to understand the words, not just read them. Parents are sometimes concerned that their child has come out with a lower score in reading than at primary school but it could be that previous reading tests were not reading *comprehension* tests, merely reading *accuracy* tests (simply reading without testing

understanding). Results come in the form of a reading age and a standardised score which enables us to take age into account.

### **Vernon Graded Word Spelling Test**

This tells us of a pupil's spelling ability and again, results come in the form of a spelling age and a standardised score.

### **MIDYIS**

This is a new test which has been introduced for the first time this year. It provides us with additional data which enables us to monitor progress effectively. It is delivered in one hour but consists of a number of sub-tests such as Vocabulary, Maths, Skills (Proof-reading) and Non-verbal ability.

### **NFER-Nelson Mathematics 11 Test**

This test assesses children's skills and understanding of Maths. It gives results as a standardised score. Unlike the English test, which is only used to determine the Learning Support groups, this test is used to set the entire year group in Maths.



A selected number of students who we feel need monitoring more closely, are re-tested for reading for literacy at the end of Year 7. When an improvement is not evident, English teachers are consulted to see if there is a cause for concern. If the student is not making adequate progress, parents may be informed or the students concerned may be considered for access arrangements in examinations.

## **3. Allocation of Resources**

The department has several multi-sensory spelling programmes for use on the computers in the Learning Support room. Multi-sensory programmes which use several senses (sight and hearing) simultaneously are particularly recommended for students with dyslexia but can benefit any student experiencing spelling difficulties. The computers in the Learning Support room are networked and have Internet access. We have also invested in software for non-readers such as *Communicate in Print* and *Clicker 6*. Students in the English Learning Support groups work through Dyslexia Action software called *Units of Sound*, a personalised reading and spelling programme aimed at meeting the needs of individual students.

The use of resources is also determined by the nature of the difficulty being addressed; a child's statement may identify access to a specific aid which the school may have to purchase. This obviously varies as new students with different needs enter the school; for example, software which adapts reading texts so they are modified for use with visually impaired students.



#### 4. Curriculum Arrangements

Students who score below a certain reading age at the start of Year 7 (this age varies each year depending on the nature of the year group) are placed within small Learning Support groups of about 10 students. Generally, if a student is in the English Learning Support group, they are also in the small groups for other high literacy Humanities subjects (History, Geography and Religious Studies) though this is not always the case. Maths Learning Support groups are assessed separately. There are also Learning Support groups in Science and French.

These groups provide a more individual response to students' difficulties than the larger mainstream classes and, with the exception of English, study the same topics as the other classes but at a more accessible level. In the small English groups, there is a greater emphasis on basic skills such as phonics and the recognition of common sight words. Once the groups are formed, the Learning Support department invites parents of students in the Learning Support groups to an evening training session in preparation for a six week paired reading literacy programme which takes place in the Autumn term.

The Learning Support groups are monitored and anyone who we feel is making significant progress may move back to mainstream classes. Likewise, students who were not initially selected through the screening process but who are struggling in mainstream classes can move into Learning Support groups as the year progresses. In Year 8, a small number of selected students who we feel would benefit from participating in literacy booster groups, may not study a second modern foreign language.

Assistance with help is available at lunchtime in the Learning Support dept for any students who are having difficulty completing homework tasks. There is also a Games Club which runs for students in Years 7 and 8. We have introduced a number of computer-free lunchtimes for Games Club, to encourage students to interact with each other through group activities such as board games and a selection of craft activities.

For students in Years 10 and 11, there is the option of taking a Core and Future Key Skills course which provides additional help for students studying GCSE English and Maths. Alternatively, there is a Personal Development ASDAN programme which covers a variety of topics linked with personal development such as communication and employability skills. The course operates both in and out of school and includes a range of practical experiences as well as the opportunity to acquire extra qualifications in areas such as first aid and catering. The ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) scheme is highly regarded by Further and Higher Education institutes and in order to take the course, students have a slightly reduced timetable, which disapples them from studying a foreign language at Key Stage 4.

#### 5. Implementing the new Code of Practice

Our school's Local Offer (a legal requirement which outlines the provision we make in school for all students) is published on the school's website. With the new Code, there is an increased focus on Quality First Teaching (also called Wave One Provision). Quality First Teaching relates to the strategies adopted by the classroom teachers in order to accommodate the needs of all the learners in their lessons.



Some students with SEN Support have an Individual Provision Maps (IPMs), which gives teachers detailed information to enable these students to access the curriculum. Though these contain one or two generic targets, most student targets are set by individual subject teachers and through review meetings. The

department also runs a programme called *Get Organised!* which is designed to help nominated students with the organisation of their work and equipment. The club takes place before or during registration.

Teachers may discuss any students in school with the Learning Support department, if they feel they would benefit from more specific strategies or support. Both teachers and Teaching Assistants are very good at informing myself or Heads of Year of any problems which may not have been picked up in the initial screening tests or may have only recently developed. The department also liaises regularly with a wide range of outside agencies such as the Sensory and Physical Support Service (for students with physical, visual and hearing impairments), EMS (Autism Outreach Service), the Careers Service, and may refer more complex difficulties to an Educational Psychologist.



### **Conclusion**

Effective and regular communication with parents is a key ingredient for the success of the department and we welcome any queries you may have. If you would like to get in touch, please do not hesitate to contact me on the school number (01423-885814) or e-mail me directly on [j.rowland@staidans.co.uk](mailto:j.rowland@staidans.co.uk).

Jane Rowland  
(RSA Dip SpLD)  
Head of Learning Support

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