

Individual Needs Teaching

St John's recognises and welcomes its duties under the Equality Act 2010, the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEN and Disability Code of Practice 0-25 Years 2014. The school's Disability Policy and Accessibility Plan are available to parents on request.

This policy applies to all pupils in the school, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The definition of a 'disability' under the Equality Act 2010

In the Act, a person has a disability if:

- they have a physical or mental impairment
- the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities

For the purposes of the Act, these words have the following meanings:

- 'substantial' means more than minor or trivial
- 'long-term' means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least twelve months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions)
- 'normal day-to-day activities' include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping

People who have had a disability in the past that meets this definition are also protected by the Act.

The Disability Policy sets out the school's approach to disability in general. The school's Individual Needs provision deals particularly with problems of curriculum access associated with learning difficulties or other disabilities.

As set out in the school's Ethos and Aims, we aim 'to meet the individual needs, foster the aptitudes and nurture the growth of each child.' In this sense, the school's Individual Needs provision is part of a wider commitment to helping any child to discover his or her ability. The provisions of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability aside, we do not view learning difficulties as disabling but rather as obstacles to fulfilling potential which, with appropriate support, can in many cases be overcome.

This difference of emphasis has significant consequences. It is by no means the case that learning difficulties are experienced only by the less able. Indeed, the problems encountered by the most gifted children can require considerable specialist attention. St John's is therefore committed to meeting the needs of children who have an identified learning difficulty, whatever their innate ability. It is worthy of note, in this respect, that many children who gain academic awards to their senior schools have, at some point, been given Individual Needs support.

While the Individual Needs department's Procedure for Referral and Organization of Provision (PROP) follows the approach recommended by the DfE SEN Code of Practice 2014, the school far exceeds any statutory obligations in its approach to identifying and meeting a child's needs.

St John's has specialist staff, trained and qualified to recognize, assess and deal with learning problems throughout the age and ability range. We do not have a separate Individual Needs 'unit' because the close relationship and constant communication between Individual Needs and mainstream teachers (many wear both hats) is an essential factor in the early identification and the continuing management of any difficulty. As a

consequence, 'internal' assessment of children is commonplace when a difficulty has been observed and has been discussed with parents.

In a similar vein, the 'threshold' of intervention is much lower than in most schools. The vast majority of children in receipt of support will have very mild or mild specific learning difficulties. For many of these, the provision will be relatively short term, addressing a particular concern at a particular time. For others, support may be needed throughout their time at the school and beyond.

The level of awareness of all staff is very high. There is an 'Action Plan' for every child in the school which is constantly updated and formally reviewed and attention to the individual child is a part of the culture. For children with learning difficulties, through specific training and through involvement in framing each child's Individual Targets, the mainstream teachers are made fully aware of any child's difficulties and can therefore plan their teaching accordingly. In this respect, all children benefit greatly from the teachers' awareness of different learning styles, irrespective of whether they have a learning difficulty.

The level of communication with home is, likewise, very high. Parents are informed of any concern, give their permission for any assessment, discuss the outcomes of such assessment in detail with the staff concerned and are fully involved thereafter in the creation and regular updating of a child's Individual Needs Targets. They meet formally and informally with a child's Individual Needs teacher to discuss progress and agree action.

The school is able to refer children to a wide range of outside agencies (Educational Psychologists, Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Optometrists, etc) all of whom work in close co-operation with the Individual Needs department. Any such referral is discussed with parents before it goes ahead and the outcome of any assessment is communicated to all mainstream teaching staff.

The effect of a learning difficulty on a child's self-esteem is of paramount concern. While the identification of a difficulty is naturally a cause for concern to parents, it is almost always a source of comfort to the child. To know that there is a difficulty and that you will be helped to overcome it is a reassuring process and, while children's self-esteem is very closely monitored and carefully nurtured by the department and by the staff as a whole, being given Individual Needs support is felt as positive by the vast majority of children concerned. It is a matter of pride, in this respect, that our children will talk openly and without embarrassment to prospective parents about their difficulties.

The range of Individual Needs teaching, as outlined below, is wide and will vary according to a child's needs.

- 1:1 support to address English or Maths difficulties, or to offer support with other learning needs.
- Small group support offering help in a variety of areas, such as English, Maths, motor skills, touch typing, reading and spelling.
- Further English and Maths support is sometimes made available to those who do not study Latin or French in Forms 4-6.

Following assessment, some children will benefit from using a laptop in class. Provision for the use of laptops in examinations is negotiated by the school, as appropriate, with a child's future school.

EYFS provision

Children who may need specialist help and assistance are supported by the Byron House Head of Individual Needs (SENCO) who is Katherine Brown. Our policy is to put in early intervention and to assess needs on an ongoing basis. From these discussions strategies are put in place to support children, which are then reviewed on a regular basis to see if they are being effective. Key strategies are shared with parents who are also always informed if any outside assessments are required.

Timetabling of Individual Needs Lessons

The individual needs of each child are taken into account when timetabling lessons. Lessons take place before school, during part of lunchtime or in specified timetable slots which cause the least disruption to mainstream teaching.

Assessment

The Head of Individual Needs makes arrangements for all forms of internal or external assessment of children. Internal assessments are conducted by one of our specialist assessors at school regularly throughout the academic year; there is no cost to the parents for internal assessments.

Sometimes, the school may propose a referral for external assessment, such as by an Educational Psychologist or Occupational Therapist. In this instance, the cost is borne by the parents. In the best interests of the children, parents are expected to share with the school any information arising from external assessments, including ones which they have arranged themselves.

Where an Individual Needs assessment by the School's staff or by an outside agency is deemed necessary prior to the offer of a place, parents of potential new entrants should expect to bear the cost of such assessment.

Application for an 'Education, Health and Care plan'

Where the school and parents need help to meet the needs of a child, we will apply for an 'Education, Health and Care plan'. In such circumstances, the school undertakes to work in accordance with the Code of Practice and in co-operation with parents, the child, the LA and other agencies as appropriate, to reach an outcome that is in a child's best interests. With regard to the admission to the school of a child with an EHC plan, the school operates in accordance with its Disability Policy.