

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY

Objective

To help students with special needs to access the curriculum most effectively, to fulfil their potential and to experience academic success.

Context

MPW Birmingham is a mainstream independent college catering for students aged between 14 and 19+. The College is not, and does not intend to be, a specialist provider for those with special educational needs. However, the provision which we can make for students who appear to have a learning difficulty includes:

- learning support
- bespoke individual subject tuition
- referral to an educational consultant for a formal assessment and specialist help if required.

We shall do all that is reasonable to report to, and consult with, parents about their child's learning difficulties and to ensure that teachers are given any necessary information about a child's learning difficulties and that teaching practices are appropriate.

Aims

- to identify, at an early stage, what and where the needs are and how best they can be met
- to foster good practice in terms of teaching and pastoral support to ensure special needs are accommodated for
- to ensure that as far as possible individual special needs provision does not exclude students from mainstream provision
- to foster partnerships with students, parents and external support providers to ensure that students with special needs make good progress to provide appropriate INSET for new and existing staff

Some students may be affected by circumstances which impinge upon their educational progress. It is the responsibility of each teacher to be sympathetic to the special needs of each student, whether they are general or specific learning difficulties, physical and sensory impairments or emotional and behavioural difficulties, in order to remove barriers to learning.

Definition of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

This policy uses the term Special Educational Needs as defined by the DfES in its Revised Code of Practice (2002).

Children with special educational needs all have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children of a similar age. Such children will normally require special educational provision to be made for them.

The following important points should be noted:

- A student must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or medium of communication of the home is different from the language in which he or she will be taught.
- A student who finds a particular subject difficult does not necessarily have a 'learning disability' in the legal sense of the term; there will often be disparities in the speed with which students learn, in their skill at solving problems and in their general acumen.
- The expression 'learning difficulty' covers a wide range of conditions and may include those known as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder, semantic processing difficulty and learning problems which result from emotional or behavioural disorders. The expression may also include those who have problems with their eyesight, hearing, or those who have an autistic disorder.
- Learning difficulties may affect students who have a high IQ and academic ability as well as those of lower IQ and academic ability. Sometimes a student's learning difficulty becomes apparent for the first time during the secondary phase of education, when educational pressures tend to increase.

Admissions Arrangements

The College is happy to receive applications from students with mild to moderate special educational needs. Parents are asked at interview whether their child has any special educational needs as part of a discussion about the support the College can provide and whether this support is appropriate to the needs of the individual student.

Identification, Assessment and Monitoring of Learning Needs

Identification

Students who have already been diagnosed as having special educational needs before joining the school will be referred to the Personal Tutor and Registrar, who

will then begin the process of collating the information necessary to help relevant members of staff to consider implications for teaching practice and general academic support. Relevant information will be sought from various sources to create a comprehensive profile of historical evidence of need and support. Sources of information may include:

- reports and references from feeder schools. In particular, at the point of entry to Years 10 and 11 the last two academic reports and any available SATS reports will be requested. For students entering Years 12 and 13, requests for Access Arrangements for public examinations will be in existence, which can be forwarded from the previous school.
- Educational psychologist reports
- Feedback information provided by those who interviewed the student as part of the admissions process

Pupils who have not been diagnosed before as having a learning difficulty but whose learning causes concern will be referred to the Personal tutor as early as possible. Referral can come from a variety of sources:

- Subject-tutor request
- Parental request
- Pupil self-request
- Following information from the student's previous school

Assessment

As poor attainment and slow progress through the curriculum are the key indicators of a student's potential learning difficulties, their progress in these terms will be the primary means for assessing the performance of any support.

Where needed, a formal assessment of specific learning difficulties will be conducted externally by a chartered educational psychologist.

Monitoring and review

Monitoring and review of the student's progress is the responsibility of the Personal Tutor utilizing information gathered from subject tutors.

Types of individual support

- The needs may be addressed primarily through the support of the Personal Tutor.
- In some cases, support may involve subject specific strategies or it may be more appropriate to offer some individual or group support, such as supplementary tuition.
- Differentiated work in the classroom
- Enlisting, in consultation and with the agreement of parents, the assistance of an external educational psychologist or another appropriate professional agency. *All costs for such professional services will be met entirely by the fee payer.* Copies of any reports arising from such consultations will be added to the student's file and the recommendations made will be communicated to the student's teachers.
- Professional recommendations for specialist provision (i.e. physical or practical aids e.g. a laptop computer) may be met within or outside the college. *If it is possible to offer provision in college, any additional cost will be agreed upon and met by parents.*
- Liaison with awarding bodies to ensure the appropriate access arrangements are put in place.

Special Examination Access Arrangements

Students with learning difficulties may qualify for special examination arrangements to be made. The Examinations Officer oversees all applications for special examination arrangements. The College is required to follow the procedures laid down by the Joint Council for Qualifications [www.jcq.org.uk/access_arrangements/] when applying for and implementing any special arrangements agreed to. Special examination arrangements may include provision of one or more of the following:

- extra time
- supervised rest periods
- a reader
- a scribe
- a practical assistant
- transcription
- use of a word processor
- modified question papers

Recommendations for Special Arrangements should derive from an identified documented educational need evidenced, for example, in an existing Psychological

Report or a Specialist Teacher's Assessment Report. There needs to be historical evidence of the need; parents will be expected to furnish relevant, updated documentary evidence at a student's point of entry.

Where possible, MPW will offer students with special access arrangements the opportunity to rehearse throughout their courses e.g. allowing extra time for coursework assignments or during internal college examinations. This may not always be practicable during weekly timed assignments but should be allowed for mock examinations. However, the College is unable to offer extended lesson time over and above that received by the whole class. Where training for extra time is recommended, the college would advise parents to seek guidance from a specialist teacher outside the college.

In the case of special arrangements involving the use of a laptop computer, it is important to note that reports recommending the use of laptops must be provided by **31st October** for January examinations and **21st February** for June examinations. Such reports must be dated within the two years prior to the examination in question. Students who are allowed to use laptops will be encouraged to gain as much practice in their use as possible, including using their laptop during lessons.

Staff Awareness and INSET

Information regarding the special educational needs of their students is available to teaching staff in the centrally held student files. Opportunities for professional development occur in various ways throughout the academic year. This may involve an individual member of staff attending an INSET course held outside college or a wider staff audience may be reached through sessions organised in College.

Policy evaluation

The effectiveness MPW's learning support policy is monitored on an ongoing basis by the Senior Management Team. As part of the review process, feedback and information will be drawn from a variety of sources including:

- the academic progress of students requiring learning support
- feedback from individual subject tutors
- student feedback

Other relevant documentation

- College's ethos and aims
- Admissions policy
- Curriculum policy