



Special Educational Needs Policy – A Whole School Approach

Context

Coláiste Mhuire is committed to creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all our students and is guided by the legislation regarding students with SEN as listed below:

The Education Act (1998)
 The Education Welfare Act(2000)
 The Equal Status Act(2000)
 The Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill (2003)
 The Equality Act (2004)
 The Data Protection Acts (1988, 1998 and 2003)
 The Freedom of Information Acts (1997 and 2003)
 The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)
 The Disability Act (2005)
 The General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679)
 Circular No: 0014/2017: Special Education Teaching Allocation

The Education Act 1998 states that its function is

“.....to make provision in the interests of the common good for the education of every person in the state, including any person with a disability or who has other special educational needs”.

The EPSEN Act 2004 states that its purpose is to

- Provide that the education of people with special educational needs shall, wherever possible, take place in an inclusive environment with those who do not have such needs;
- Provide that people with special needs shall have the same right to avail of and benefit from appropriate education as do their peers who do not have such needs;
- Assist children with special needs to leave school with the skills necessary to participate to the level of their capacity in an inclusive way in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives, and
- Provide for the greater involvement of parents of children with special educational needs in the education of their children.

This document is drawn up in the context of these acts and to ensure that students with special educational needs are given the opportunity to achieve their full potential in the school.

As a vocational school, we are committed to the importance of special education. This policy allows us the opportunity to reflect on, explore and articulate what it means to be a Christian vocational school.

Definition

According to the Education Act 1998 'disability' means;

- The partial or total loss of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the loss of part of the person's body, or
- The presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness, or
- The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body, or
- A condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or
- A condition, illness or disease which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour

Categories of Special Needs

There are a number of categories of SEN outlined in the Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs – Post Primary Guidelines (DES, 2007)

- Physical Disability
- Hearing Impairment
- Visual Impairment
- Severe Emotional Disturbance and/or Behaviour Problem
- Mild General Learning Disability
- Borderline General Learning Disability
- Specific Learning Disability
- Moderate General Learning Disability
- Severe or Profound General Learning Disability
- Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Pupils with SEN arising from an Assessed Syndrome
- Specific Speech and Language Disorder
- Multiple Disabilities

According to the EPSEN Act 2004

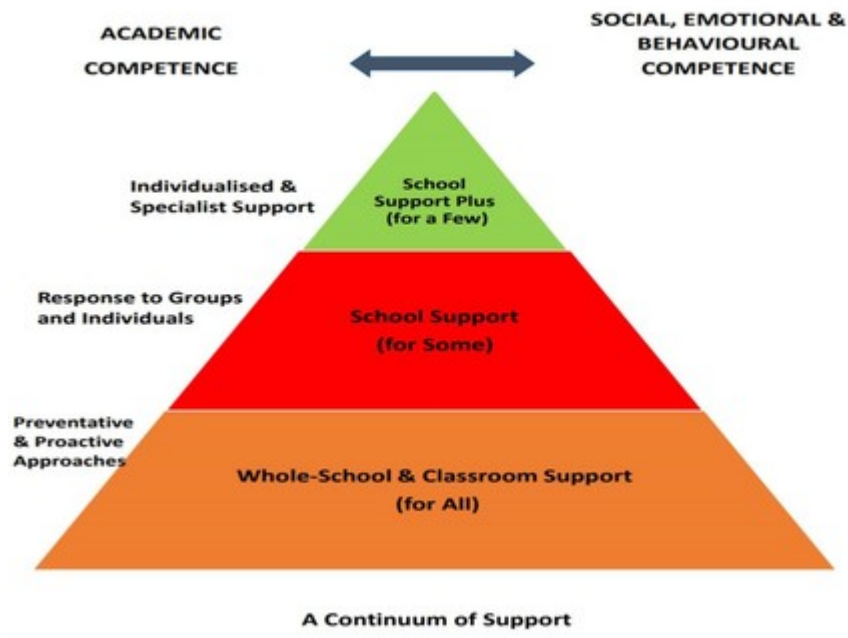
“ special education needs means, in relation to a person, a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition, and cognate words shall be construed accordingly” (Section1)

Implementation of the Revised Special Education Teaching Model (2017)

(DES Guidelines for Post Primary Schools: Supporting Students with SEN in Mainstream Schools, Pg.5)

The following principles in addition to the criteria devised by the school (See **Appendix 1**) will be adhered to in the implementation of the Revised SET Model in Coláiste Mhuire and in the creation of a whole school approach to the provision of support for SEN students:

- Resources provided to support SEN students will be used to facilitate the development of a truly inclusive school.
- Supports provided to SEN students will be based on identified needs and be informed by regular reviews of progress (in consultation with teachers, parents and students) as outlined in the Continuum of Support Guidelines



- The subject teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in the classroom, including SEN students.
- SET supports provided to the school will be used solely for the support of SEN students, including for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL)

- Students with the greatest level of need will have access to the greatest level of support, and wherever possible, those students will be supported by teachers with relevant expertise who can provide continuity of support.
- The school will aim to establish and maintain a core team of teachers to meet the needs of SEN students. All members will have the necessary experience and access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to support the diverse needs of SEN students.

Relationship to Coláiste Mhuire’s Mission Statement & Values



“ Our vision is to enrich the educational and spiritual development of students in a caring, Christian school community.”

- Coláiste Mhuire fosters equality and inclusion in a place where the educational needs of all students are catered for in a caring way.
Inclusion is defined as a process by:
 1. Addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners through enabling participation in learning, cultures and communities and
 2. Removing barriers to education through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements, to enable each learner to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her attendance at school.

Literature Review of the principles and Practices relating to Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs (NCSE 2010, pg.39)
- The school recognises the importance of adapting to the needs of all students.
- The school seeks to provide the necessary resources to enrich our whole school community.
- The school recognises the need to work together as a whole school community.
- Each student is accepted unconditionally.

Aims of the SEN Department in Coláiste Mhuire

- To support students experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties through a team approach, which involves the students themselves, their teachers, parents/guardians and other relevant internal or external personnel.
- To ensure that each SEN student will benefit from the optimum learning opportunities offered by the school as designed by the Department of Education and Science or designed specifically by Coláiste Mhuire.
- To ensure that students with SEN are offered a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum and that they are provided for in an inclusive way.

- To ensure the exceptionally gifted students, the students with emotional and behavioural difficulties and the students with learning difficulties reach their full potential by adopting a holistic, whole school approach.
- To develop positive self esteem and a positive attitude towards school and learning among students with Special Educational Needs.
- To address the needs of students whose achievement is at a very low level and who are at risk of not reaching adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving secondary school.
- To implement a system of monitoring and recording progress.
- To ensure that every student feels included and supported in our school.

In an attempt to achieve these aims a team will be responsible for students with special educational needs at Coláiste Mhuire. The team will consist of:

- The Principal
- The Deputy Principal
- SEN Co-ordinators
- SEN Teachers
- Special Needs Assistants
- Guidance Counsellor

The SENO and the Educational Psychologist will provide external support.

The Role of the Board of Management:

- To develop, support and monitor school policy in relation to Special Educational Needs.
- To ensure that the child with SEN is educated in an inclusive environment.
- To ensure that parents of a child with SEN are informed of their child's needs and how these are being met and are consulted on all significant decisions.
- To ensure that relevant teachers and employees of the school are aware of the special educational needs of the child and the importance of identifying special educational needs.
- To ensure that a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum is provided to ensure that students learn the skills necessary to participate in society.
- To ensure that necessary resources are sought on behalf of students with SEN.
- To ensure adequate classroom accommodation.
- To promote inclusion by ensuring an awareness of SEN is instilled in all of the school community.

The Role of the Principal:

- Overall responsibility for the development and implementation of a Special Educational Needs policy.
- To identify a teacher to take responsibility for the co-ordination of SEN teaching and learning.
- To make applications for additional teaching hours and resources in consultation with the SEN co-ordinators.

- To oversee the processing of applications for ‘Exemptions from Irish’ for students in line with Circular 0055/2022.
- To support the SEN department.
- To liaise with the SEN Co-ordinators, the SENO and the Educational Psychologists.
- To provide the necessary resources.
- To keep the SEN team informed of resources available, the Department of Education and Science Circulars and the availability of external support.
- To encourage and facilitate career development.

The Role of the Co-ordinator(S)

- To maintain a list of the students in receipt of additional teaching hours.
- To co-ordinate the timetable of additional teaching hours.
- To liaise with the principal, the SENO and the Educational Psychologists.
- To liaise with parents/guardians of students in receipt of additional teaching hours.
- To assist in the identification of students with SEN.
- To advise teachers of the recommendations made in professional reports relating to individual students.
- To process applications for RACE.
- To provide RACE in house exams where possible given the resources available.
- To administer and correct standardised assessments.
- To ensure systems are in place for the referral of students by teachers, parents, etc.
- To be a member of the pastoral care team.
- To advise and collaborate with SNAs around the care needs of relevant students.
- To create an awareness and understanding of SEN within the school community
- To liaise with primary schools in facilitating the transition of SEN students.
- To arrange and facilitate transition visits for SEN students.
- To apply for and arrange for the receipt of resources.
- To provide for a range of internal and/or external assessment as appropriate
- To maintain records of schemes of work, outcomes of assessment and progress
- To advise the State Examination Secretary on the requirement of special accommodation for students with special educational needs.
- To process applications for and advise the principal of the number and names of students with special educational needs who are entitled to exemptions from Irish as laid out in Circular 0055/2022.
- To keep the whole staff updated on incoming and existing students with special educational needs.
- To liaise with SEN teachers and SNAs.

The Role of Mainstream teachers

- Mainstream teachers are obliged to make themselves aware of the special educational needs of students in their classes. They have full access to all information that is relevant to the teaching or supervising of such students via the individual files kept on each student in the SEN office, on VS Ware and on our Staff Share-Point.
- In so far as possible, classroom teaching should be differentiated to meet the individual needs of students in classes.
- To be aware of the school's policy and procedures(as outlined in this policy) for dealing with SEN, and ensure that all students needs are met.
- To seek advice from the SEN Department regarding students with SEN.
- To participate in CPD in the area of SEN.
- To encourage/support independence in the student.
- To create opportunities for success.
- To complete referral forms, transfer of information forms, etc as required by the SEN team.
- To consider the needs of SEN students in all aspects of classroom planning.
- Direct the work of the SNAs in the classroom.

The Role of the Student

- Students should have a positive attitude towards participation in their own learning
- Students should become familiar with their learning targets and be involved in the setting of those targets.
- Students should contribute to the selection of material relevant to the attainment of these targets.
- Students should participate fully in all assessments.
- Students should develop ownership of the skills and strategies they are taught as part of the additional support they receive and learn to apply these to improve their own learning.

The Role of Parents

- As the primary and natural educators of the child, parents must ensure that Coláiste Mhuire is provided with timely access to professional reports that are critical to collaborative planning for students with special educational needs.
- Parents should ensure that they attend all parent-teacher and general information meetings as arranged by the school.
- Parents can support the work of the school by providing a home environment where there are opportunities for learning and participating with their child in the following activities:
 1. Paired Reading
 2. Using ICT where available to support learning in English and Mathematics.

3. Implementing suggested home based activities outlined in their child's support plan and discussing the outcomes with the child's teachers.
- It is important that parents talk positively about school and school work
 - Parents should keep the school informed of the progress that they observe in their child's learning. They should also let the school know of any learning difficulties that they observe in their child at home.

The Role of the Special Needs Assistants (for full list see SNA Policy)

- To provide care assistance to named students who have special educational needs.
- Assisting students to stay on task, follow classroom procedures and interact appropriately.
- Assisting students in establishing and maintaining a consistent routine.
- To recognise their role in the health and safety of the student and in their social, emotional and educational development, without developing a culture of dependency.
- Attending both Staff and Departmental meetings when appropriate.
- Assisting / escorting students on school trips.
- Giving special assistance as necessary for students with particular difficulties e.g. helping student with SEN with typing, writing or other use of equipment.
- Assisting with clothing, feeding, toileting and hygiene, being mindful of health and safety needs of the student.
- Assisting with house examinations (if appropriate).
- Assisting the teacher in the supervision of pupils during assembly, recreation and in movement from one classroom to another.
- Attending and providing written observation sheets and verbal feedback at weekly meetings with the SEN Co-Ordinators and Deputy Principal and submitting Incident Report Forms when necessary.
- Engagement with parents of students with SEN as required and directed by school management.
- Other appropriate duties as may be determined by the needs of the pupils and the school.
- The SNA may be re-assigned to other appropriate work when special needs students are absent or when particularly urgent work demands arise.

The Role of the Guidance Councillor

- To work with the other members of the SEN team in facilitating the provision of education for students with SEN and their inclusion in the school.
- Counselling in personal, educational and career development
- Co-ordinating a number of assessments including the CAT4 prior to entry and again in TY.
- Providing career information.

- Presenting at the Options Information Evening for students and parents of students progressing to Senior Cycle.
- Consulting with parents and staff.
- Consulting with community organisations.
- Providing vocational preparation – job search skills, preparation for work experience.
- Working closely with subject teachers and the SEN team to identify students requiring support.
- Facilitating individual appointments for students in third year, TY and Leaving Cert Year to support them in making career decisions.
- Advising students and parents on subject choice and subject load.
- To liaise with students, parents and the SEN team in relation to DARE applications.

The Role of the SEN Teacher

- Providing informal assessments for students at regular intervals in order to monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention.
- Collaborating with subject teachers by giving advice on teaching methodologies best suited to a student.
- Providing direct teaching to a student with SEN either to reinforce the teaching that takes place in the classroom or to improve upon the core skills that may be necessary to successfully access the second level curriculum.
- To provide team teaching/ cooperative teaching when withdrawal from the classroom may not be the most appropriate means of supporting the student.
- Contributing at meetings involving parents and/or outside agencies when appropriate.
- Collecting and analysing school-wide screening data, including in-take screening, transfer information, attendance and behavioural records. Gathering information from subject teachers/ other staff
- Planning, implementing and reviewing individual and/or group interventions
- Seeking external professional advice, as needed.
- To advise SNA's around the care needs of relevant students.

Bodies outside the school

The Department of education and skills (DES)
 The National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
 The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
 The Special Education Support Service (SESS)
 The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
 The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)
 The Health Service Executive (HSE)

Procedures for New Students

In Coláiste Mhuire we use the DES Continuum of Support framework to engage in a three step process in identifying and responding to student's needs. This framework recognises that SEN occur along a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, from transient to long term, and that students require different levels of support depending on their needs. Using this framework helps ensure that interventions are incremental, moving from class based interventions to more intensive and individualised support and that they are informed by careful monitoring of progress (*DES Guidelines for Post Primary Schools: Supporting Students with SEN in Mainstream Schools, Pg 6*)

Step 1: Identification of Need

Prior to school entry:

- Enrolment Form: Opportunity for parents to inform us of SEN
- Transition Meetings with Feeder Schools
- NGRT
- CAT4 Test
- Open Day: Conversations with Parents
- Parent and Student Meetings in December with Principal, Deputy Principal or Guidance Counsellor.
- Contact with parents if deemed necessary based on CAT4, NGRT
- Meetings between Parents and SEN Co-ordinators prior to Entry
- Education Passport
- Assessment Reports from external agencies given to us by parents

This information will:

- Assist in the identification of students with SEN.
- Assist in identifying the programme most suitable to meet his/her needs (Junior Certificate or Junior Certificate Schools Programme)
- Identify the need for resource hours and/or access to a Special Needs Assistant.
- Identify the need for the application for an official 'Exemption from Irish'
- Identify the need for the application for ICT grants.
- Identify the specific 'Special Accommodation' for examinations that may be required by the SEN student.
- Identify the need for a reduced timetable so as the student can be withdrawn from class for individual or group teaching.
- Identify students who do not have specific or general learning difficulties, but who may require learning support.

The principal will make applications Special Needs Assistants/ICT grants/exemptions from Irish in consultation with the SEN Department.

Upon school entry:

- Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT4) where deemed appropriate
- Teacher observations
- Care Team observations: Weekly meeting of Principal, Deputy Principal, SENCO, Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Home School Liaison Officer, School Completion Officer and Dean of Discipline.
- SNA Observations: Weekly meeting of Deputy Principal, SNA Team and SEN Co-Ordinators.

Students with SEN transferring from another post-primary school:

A Student Transfer Profile will be sent to the former school of any student with SEN who transfers from another post-primary school.

Step 2 – Meeting Needs

(Special Educational Needs, A Continuum of Support, p.5-35)

- When SEN students are identified through the process outlined above a Student Support File will be created for each of those students in response to their individual needs.
- Student Support Files will be created through a collaborative process involving the SEN Team, Subject Teachers, parents, the student and sometimes external professionals.
- The Student Support File will allow the SEN Team and Subject Teachers to document progress over time and it will assist us in providing an appropriate level of support to students in line with their level of need.
- Following a period of intervention and review of progress, a decision will be made regarding the appropriate level of support required by the student. This may result in a decision to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or to move to a higher or lower level of support.
- Milder, transient needs will be met through classroom based support by the mainstream teacher i.e. differentiation
- Individualised support will be provided for students with more complex and/or enduring needs.

Step 3 – Monitor and Recording Outcomes

- Students' progress in relation to achieving their targets will be regularly and carefully monitored through the Classroom Support, School Support and School Support Plus Process.
- This will be done through formal and informal assessment and observation and reports from Subject Teachers, SEN teachers, parents and students.

Models of SEN Provision

The NEPS Continuum of Support is used in conjunction with the school's *Criteria for the Selection of Students for SEN Support as drafted in December 2018 (See Appendix 1)* as a framework to provide support for all students with SEN.

1. **Support For All** is a process of prevention, effective mainstream teaching and early identification. These systems are available to all students and effectively meet the needs of most students.
2. **Support For Some** is an assessment and intervention process which is directed to some students, or groups of students who require some additional input.
3. **School Support Plus (for a few)** is generally characterised by more intensive and individualised supports. This level of intervention is for students with complex and/or enduring needs and relatively few students will need this level of support.

In line with above the following options are considered in Coláiste Mhuire as a means of meeting the needs of the students:

- Curricular Differentiation
- Curricular Reduction – This occurs only when all avenues have been exhausted. A consultation between the parents/guardian and guidance teacher is necessary. Parents must sign a consent form giving permission for a reduced subject load.
- Team Teaching/Co-operative Teaching
- In-class support/differentiation
- Inclusion of SNA in specific classes
- Small group withdrawal
- Typing Classes
- Organisation and Life skills classes

Assessment

In Coláiste Mhuire assessment is used for the following purpose:

1. To identify students for support.
2. To evaluate student progress
3. To inform planning and appropriate teaching and learning.
4. To establish a baseline in relation to a student's attainments in literacy and numeracy.
5. To inform consultations with outside agencies, ie NEPS.
6. To ensure a true mixed ability class setting.

Classroom Settings

Coláiste Mhuire provides a variety of classroom settings for students with special educational needs, as follows:

- Students are assigned to mainstream classes from 2nd to 6th year inclusive for Irish, English and Maths based on their ability or attainment.
- Withdrawal of students for individual or small-group teaching – this occurs for students following consultation between the students, the parents, the mainstream teacher and SEN teacher.
- A model of classroom setting to which the school aspires is co-operative/team teaching whereby the teaching team in the classroom will be made up of the mainstream teacher and the learning support teacher. This model will be kept under review by the SEN department and discusses with all relevant partners as necessary.

Parental Involvement

- In the Coláiste we believe that schools are most successful in achieving their duty of care of Special Needs Students when the school and home mutually reinforce each other.
- Communication is the key factor in achieving this.
- Parents/ Guardians will be kept informed of their sons/daughters educational progress and needs through regular parent/ guardian/teacher meetings or through meetings arranged by the SEN Department.

Collaboration

- The SEN teachers will meet with the class teacher/ subject teacher on a regular basis to report progress and / or to gather additional information.
- Staff members are informed of all students with SEN and the recommendations from relevant reports are available on VS Ware. The SEN Co-Ordinators keep the staff up to date via email and at staff meetings.
- The SEN Co-ordinators meet with the SNAs weekly to report and gather information and to decide on actions going forward.

Record keeping

Individual student files will accommodate comprehensive records of student assessment, communication with parents and progress. All files will be secured in a locked filing cabinet.

In-Career Development

In – career development will be encouraged and facilitated, for individual SEN teachers, for the SEN team and for the full teaching staff where appropriate.

Staff Mentoring

The Principal and/or the Co-ordinator will provide in-house training to every new teacher and special needs assistant (SNA) as he/ she joins the team, to ensure a full understanding of policy and procedure in relation to SEN students at Coláiste Mhuire, Buttevant.

Monitoring/Review and Evaluation

The policy requires constant monitoring and evaluation to ensure successful implementation and to review what adjustments may be necessary from time to time. To achieve this, the policy must be monitored and reviewed within a certain time frame. At the end of the school year the SEN team and the Principal will meet to evaluate the success of the policy implementation.

Reviewed on the 27th of October 2022.

Date of next Review is October 2023

Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: _____

Secretary, Board of Management

Date: _____

Appendix 1

Criteria for the Selection of Students for SEN Withdrawal (Draft - 20th December 2018)

The criteria devised by the school are in-line with the General Allocation Model of Support as set out in the DES circular 0014/2017 and the NEPS Continuum of Support.

1. Once a student has been identified as experiencing difficulty, it is the responsibility of the subject teacher to address these needs. **The subject teacher will monitor the student's progress.** If targets have not been achieved, significant progress has not been made and team teaching is not available, the student may be withdrawn to obtain support on a one-to-one or in a small group setting **once a referral has been made to the SEN department. This referral should be made via email or written format.** This approach is in-line with the General Allocation Model.
2. To qualify for withdrawal, students must have evidence of average or above cognitive ability and obtained a standardised score of 85 or under in a literacy and/or numeracy Standardised test such as Access Maths 1, NGRT or WRAT4.
3. Students with a cognitive ability of 85 or under may also qualify for withdrawal. This score can be obtained from an up to date educational psychological report (no older than four years) or from CAT4 scores administered by the school.

4. Exceptionally able/gifted/talented students are those students with an IQ greater than 130. The school acknowledges and provides for the needs of these students. The needs of these students are met in the classroom, through extracurricular activities and in some circumstances these students may be provided with additional classes **when the timetable will allow and if the resources are available.**
5. The support provided **should**, at all times, be relevant to the needs of the student. Results from CAT4, WRAT4, assessment results, teacher observations and findings from relevant professional reports will be used to establish the needs of the students. Students will obtain support in the identified area of difficulty. For example a student who has severe anxiety will obtain support in how to manage stress and anxiety and not in literacy and numeracy, unless this is an identified need.
6. Educational reports must not be older than four years.
7. Class teachers and team-teachers will track progress being made by students in their classes and relay any **concerns regarding a student** to the SEN Department. This, in addition, to the bi-annually SEN review meetings which serve to monitor and track the progress being made by students.
8. Support provided to a student is reviewed bi-annually. If it is established that a student has made significant progress and a recommendation is made that support is no longer required, the student will no longer obtain support through withdrawal.

9. Students on reduced timetables do not automatically qualify for learning support. There has to be evidence of a persistent and on-going SEN need.
10. Higher level students are exempt from support. However, this may be reviewed in exceptional circumstances, i.e. literacy scores below 85.
11. Students obtaining **learning support in literacy and numeracy** on emotional grounds must be attending professional services **such as CAMHS** and must submit relevant reports/letters **to support this**.
12. The maximum number of hours that can be provided by the school to a student with significant needs enrolled in mainstream is four and half hours.