



St Joseph's Adolescent School

Roll No. 20153N

The Role and Operation of St. Joseph's Special School

The school is recognised as a Special School for adolescents experiencing 'severe emotional disturbance' and is funded on this basis by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The designated pupil-teacher ratio is 6:1. Education for students of St. Joseph's is provided in a separate school building (6 classrooms) and in one additional classroom in the Adolescent In-Patient Unit (AIPU) within the grounds of St. Vincent's Hospital, Fairview.

In common with all Special Schools, St Joseph's Adolescent School comes under the Primary Administration, Department of Education and Skills (D.E.S.), even though students attending are aged between 13 and 18 years old and generally functioning as Secondary-Level students.

Students experience a wide range of difficulties such as psychosis, severe anxiety and depression, schizophrenia, Asperger's Syndrome, eating disorders, suicidal ideation and deliberate self-harm. School placements are short-term (vary from 6 weeks to 9 months), depending on the severity of the mental health/emotional difficulties. All students are supported in their return to their local schools or alternative education/training, such as Fetac courses in Youthreach, Solas, etc.

The school operates as closely as possible within the DES guidelines while taking into account its position within St. Joseph's Adolescent & Family Service and St. Vincent's Hospital.

A young person's access to the hospital school is dictated by their status on the waiting list and the availability of a place at any time. The level and extent of a student's involvement in the school is dependent upon his/her intellectual ability, needs, mental state, and the profile of other students in the group. Young people from St Joseph's Day-Unit and St. Joseph's AIPU are eligible to attend school. The details of their attendance and the nature of their engagement will be decided with their Key-Teacher and Key Nurse, outlined in their Care Plan and specified in more detail in their Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Currently, the school is a four-teacher school, consisting of a Teaching Principal and three Permanent Teachers. The DES also grants an allocation of 500 'Teaching Hours in Co-Operation', through the CDETb annually, to be used as required to support the school programme. The resource hours facilitate the employment of three extra part-time teachers for Art, Career Guidance and Languages (Irish, French & German). A Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENO) from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is allocated to the school and the school may commission educational psychological assessments through the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

The school is open daily from 9:00am to 3:00pm. The school year is 183 days and the standardized school calendar is observed.

The school has a Board of Management (8 members) to whom the Principal reports. Within the Team, the Principal is responsible for the management of the school. School administration is currently carried out largely after school hours.

Curriculum and Management of Educational Needs

The nature of the work entails close liaisons with members of the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT), including consultant psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical director, speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, social worker, hospital chaplain, nurses and staff.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) for each student is based on the particular needs of the student in conjunction with the Secondary Level Curriculum prescribed by the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

For some students, the curriculum may include appropriate modules of Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) or Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school has developed a Vocational Programme for those students that have opted out of school or are sourcing alternative educational training (eg. FETAC, National Learning Network, Youthreach, etc.)

Subjects, currently offered in the school, include English & Communications, Mathematics, Geography, Science/Biology, Home Economics, Woodwork/DCG, Art, Irish, French, German, SPHE (Social, Personal & Health Education), LCA Modules, LCVP, Religion, ICT, Music, Career Guidance, Study Skills, Social Skills Development and P.E.

Students may take their state exams at St. Joseph's, where appropriate.

Sinead Rickerby
Principal
September 2017