

LEARNING SUPPORT POLICY

What you need to know

- As a Christian School we understand that God created each person as a learner with unique natural talents and gifts and possessing the potential for the development of these gifts.
- It is our responsibility to care for and nurture each of our students to the best of their ability, both spiritually and intellectually, and to establish a framework where learning can take place in a safe and supportive environment.
- As our students mature in Christ, it is recognised that some will have physical, emotional, or academic learning needs and will require additional assistance to enable them to develop their God-given potential.
- The College has the privilege and obligation to provide each child with an educational experience that is rich, comprehensive, and enjoyable.

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Vision Statement

To provide a Christ-centred learning environment that empowers each individual to enjoy a life of purpose.

Purpose

This policy, which informs the operation of Learning Support at Mount Annan Christian College, is influenced by the desire to ensure that students with diverse/additional needs are given every opportunity to access and participate in education on the same basis as their peers. The ultimate goal is to develop students who recognise their God-given purpose and plan for a positive and fulfilling life and who use their gifts to contribute successfully to society.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Reflect the commitment of the College community to developing an inclusive environment where diverse needs are celebrated and not just tolerated.

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- Establish a collaborative approach across all areas, involving the student, the parent or caregiver, the ancillary staff and external agents is promoted and viewed as crucial to the success of any intervention.
- Highlight the importance of the identification and acknowledgement of gifts and potential, along with building skills to success are foundational to all that occurs within the learning support framework.
- Outline the deployment of a Head of Learning Support, a Learning Support Teacher, and Student Learning Support Officers as integral parts of the whole-school commitment to providing support and guidance for students with diverse/additional needs and their families.
- Emphasise the importance of providing early intervention and the prevention of learning failure at all stages of schooling.
- Highlight the College's commitment to professional development for classroom teachers, executive, ancillary and learning support staff.
- Ensure curriculum adjustments are collaboratively planned and implemented into the classrooms using a team approach.
- Inform how students with diverse/additional needs are provided with disability provisions during examinations and assessment tasks in line with NESA (NSW Education Standards Authority).
- Establish ways in which student progress is continually tracked and accessible to key stakeholders so that effective educational decisions can be made.

Scope

This policy applies to enrolled students of the College with diverse/additional needs, their families, and all College staff. It is also a valuable reference point for all stakeholders of the College to ensure they are aware of support procedures and to be mindful of the ways students' needs are catered for in the College and ensure a consistent and respectful approach to all learners. Specialist staff such as the Head of Learning Support, Learning Support Teacher, and Student Learning Support Officers operate under the guidance of the Executive Leadership team to ensure best practice and support for students with diverse/additional needs.

Policy implementation

Outcomes

Through participating in Learning Support at Mount Annan Christian College a range of beneficial outcomes will eventuate.

Students will:

- gain confidence and belief in their own worth and potential.
- take responsibility for their own learning.
- through assessment, understand their own strengths and limitations in learning.
- learn to set realistic goals for their own development and are content to reach them.

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- get involved in goal setting and evaluation of their own progress.
- gain skills in literacy and numeracy
- understand that the skills they gain enable them to participate more fully in school classroom programs.

Staff will:

- appreciate diversity in every class.
- gain knowledge and skills in assessment procedures and programming for students with diverse/additional needs.

The school community will:

- embrace the individual learning needs of a diverse range of students.

Definition of a Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 defines a disability as:

- total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions
- total or partial loss of a part of the body
- the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness
- the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness
- the malfunction, malformation, or disfigurement of a part of the person's body
- a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction
- a disorder, illness, or disease that:
 - affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions, and/or judgment
 - results in disturbed behaviour and includes a disability that presently exists; or
 - previously existed but no longer exists; or may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability); or is imputed to a person.

Context of a Disability

To impute a disability, the school must have reasonable evidence that a student's learning is impacted by disability. A student whose learning is affected by other factors, such as school attendance, proficiency with the English language, or disrupted schooling, would not be considered as having a disability.

NESA's policies & procedures are guided by the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Disability Standards for Education (2005). NESA provides detailed expectations for educators when teaching students with disabilities.

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Students with whom we work are identified as having a range of diverse/additional needs which may fall broadly or specifically into the following categories based on the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Education Disability Standards (2005) as interpreted by the Australian Human Rights Commission (1986).

Physical: asthma, neurological, physical, diabetes, anaphylaxis, epilepsy

Cognitive: dyslexia, Irlen syndrome, auditory processing, intellectual impairment, speech/language, brain injury.

Sensory: hearing, vision

Social/Emotional: psychiatric, ASD, clinical levels anxiety, significant mental health issues, attentional deficits.

ESL: Students with a lower achievement in academic subjects due to having a different mother tongue

Identification of Disability

THE IDENTIFICATION PROCESS	
Enrolment	Information regarding a student's needs can either be disclosed during the enrolment process OR Based on previous school reports and assessments, MACC may question possible learning needs not yet identified/diagnosed A member of the Learning Support team may be invited to attend these enrolment interviews
Consultation and Collaboration	Families, Specialists, Teachers (current and past), Previous school and Students
Observations	During the transition process - Immersion and Orientation days, Class time (curriculum and learning), Playground (social/emotional)
Diagnosis/Specialist Reports and Assessments	Reports and Assessments from Specialist can include; Speech and Language (CELF) Cognitive/Psychometric (WISC & WIAT), Occupational Therapist, Paediatric Review, Counsellor/Psychologist (Connors, Vanderbilt, ABAS)

Implementation and Organisation

It is the fundamental aim of Mount Annan Christian College that all students experience the love, care, and acceptance of a Christian Educational environment. In seeking to carry out this aim, all teaching staff are involved in the identification, programming, and ongoing assessment of students with diverse/additional needs in their classes.

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When a student is struggling to meet outcomes the class teacher liaises with the student and their parents in conjunction with the relevant Learning Support Staff. Collaborative curriculum planning occurs to determine the most appropriate curriculum options for students with diverse/additional needs in keeping with their learning needs, strengths, goals, and interests.

Elevating student voice is fundamental to learning and wellbeing and contributes to the student feeling heard, empowered, and gaining a sense of ownership in their learning so is an instrumental part of the process. In secondary, part of the process now includes a Student Learner Profile. The purpose of this is to include student voice in these plans as it is their learning. In Primary, student input is also garnered in developing the Individual Education Plan and tailored to the student's needs, interests, and preferences.

Most students with special education needs will participate fully in the learning experiences based on the regular syllabus outcomes and content. Students may require additional support or adjustments to teaching, learning, and assessment activities.

From time to time, it is necessary for staff to liaise with external specialists such as paediatricians, psychologists, occupational therapists, and speech pathologists to gain more information about how to cater specifically for student needs.

Utilising the Individual Education Plan to Implement Support

Any adjustments to the teaching and learning tasks and assessment tasks are recorded in Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Individual Education Plans are regularly updated after meetings with key personnel and are kept in a central place on our intranet. Teachers who work specifically with these students are able to access this information, add it to their class profiles, and adjust their teaching accordingly. Formal IEP meetings occur at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year, however, information is continually being evaluated and updated as the student progresses through the year. An important part of the process is regularly reviewing IEPs and the implemented approaches to best support the student and their needs based on their progress. IEP reviews occur at the commencement and conclusion of the year, as well as midyear, to ensure up-to-date strategies are in place for best practice.

Utilising the NCCD to Organise Support

The collection of data for the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) is based on the **professional judgement of teachers and school teams about the adjustments provided for students** as part of day-to-day practice. Based on the adjustments we make levels of adjustments are determined and these levels then determine school funding. It is extremely important that we have evidence of any adjustments being made. This evidence ensures we are meeting Disability Standards for Education and that our Learning Support is well organised and implemented effectively.

Evidence must be collected in the areas of:

1. Assessed Individual needs of the student
2. Adjustments being provided to the student to address their assessed needs associated with disability – this includes support provided within quality differentiated practice
3. Ongoing monitoring and review of the adjustments

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4. Consultation and collaboration with the student and/or parents, guardians or carers, or associates.

Implementation in Programming

Mount Annan Christian College has adopted a multi-tiered approach to addressing student needs. This model addresses the whole school, targeted and intensive support for all students.

Tier 1: Universal Support – The majority of students will have their needs met through the high-quality teaching and pastoral care of the classroom programs. The Learning Support staff liaise with the classroom teachers to provide support where and when it is needed. Upskilling of teachers to ensure programs reflect current academic research occurs regularly.

Tier 2: Targeted Support – These students receive instruction in small groups to assist them achieve the outcomes of the regular classroom programs. They will need adjustments to the teaching and learning and assessment tasks so that they can achieve alongside their classmates. These students (primary and secondary) are in the lower quartile of the Maths and Literacy rankings, children with language disorders that hinder them from keeping up with the rate of instruction delivered in the classrooms and students who are identified as under-achieving or socially excluded.

Tier 3: Intense Support – This support is for children who are included in the NCCD (Refer to the National Data Collection Policy) and are therefore eligible to receive Government funding. These students have an IEP and receive intensive support – either individual or small group withdrawal workshops. They need the individual support of the Learning Support Teacher and/or Student Learning Support Officers in addition to what is provided through the targeted and whole school support framework. In some cases, these students will follow the Life Skills Program of study or a combination of both regular and life skill outcomes upon reaching Year 7.

Student Learning Support Officers

The role of the Student Learning Support Officer is to:

- Provide practical assistance to students with physical or other difficulties
- Assist in ensuring safety of diverse/additional needs students
- Develop students' organisational skills
- Supporting use of assistive technology
- Implementation of research-based, structured skills-building programs e.g. literacy, numeracy, MiniLit or MacqLit. Monitoring student progress by conducting testing e.g. YARC Assist with implementing examination provisions
- Administrative tasks as required by Head of Learning Support

Our Student Learning Support Officers are in class to support classroom teachers. Whilst their primary role is to support students with a high level of need, it is vital that as the classroom teacher is responsible for reporting upon and assessing these students. When the class teacher needs time

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to work with students who are usually supported by a Student Learning Support Officer, they are able to support by supervising the other students.

Learning Support Teacher

The role of the Learning Support Teacher comprises:

- Collaborative planning for program implementation with classroom teacher
- Assisting with adjustments of teaching, learning and assessment, including assistance writing Life Skills programs
- Team-teaching
- 1:1 support with identified students on a needs basis, including support for students with mental health concerns.
- Assessment of student needs and progress
- Updating and maintaining records including Student Learning Profiles, IEPs
- Development of IEPs - collaborative planning, consulting with parents/teachers/students, evaluating goals
- Communication with teachers, pastoral care staff, parents, and specialists
- Transition support
- Administration of examination provisions not covered by class teachers
- Head of Learning Support also completes additional tasks including timetabling of staff and provisions, funding applications, organisation of external testing, Disability Provisions applications, etc.
- NCCD Process

Identification of Disability

Referral Process (Teachers):

1. Ensure you have reviewed any existing specialist reports or the child's Individual Education Plan (if there is one) before raising new concerns.
2. Speak with a Learning Support team member.
3. Complete the Learning Support Referral document.
 - We need evidence of 10 weeks of adjustments for any child to be included on the NCCD. Even if the child is not diagnosed/identified as Learning Support, there should still be evidence of attempted adjustments being made. This information can then be used to inform parents that current adjustments are not working so further assessing may be required and also justifies the College's needs when we submit data for NCCD.
4. The Learning Support engages and collaborates with teachers and families to discuss the assessment process if a need is identified

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This policy was developed in conjunction with:

- The 1992 Disability Discrimination Act: ‘It is unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a person on the grounds of that person’s disability or any associates of that person.’
- The Disability Standards for Education 2005: ‘The provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that the course or program is designed in such a way that the student is, or any student with a disability is, able to participate in the learning experiences (including the assessment and certification requirements) of the course or program and any relevant supplementary course or program, on the same basis as a student without a disability and without experiencing discrimination.’
- NESAs
- Australian Human Rights Commission

AIS NSW Research Findings

The Association of Independent Schools NSW of which the College is a member, has researched and found the following:

AIS NSW RESEARCH FINDINGS	
An Inclusive School Culture and Leadership	Accepting that educating students with diverse/additional needs and disability is an issue for the whole school, not just for individual teachers.
Teacher’s Skills	A main difference in teaching students with learning difficulties is the need to be more direct and explicit, more intensive, and more supportive. Differentiation on the basis of individual educational need and using progress monitoring to inform teaching & learning
Role of the Specialist and Support Staff	Reliance on Student Learning Support Officers to provide instruction and to function as the ‘primary’ teacher for students with disability has been shown to have unintended detrimental effects
A rigorous and relevant curriculum	Curriculum adaptation rather than a separate curriculum is best practice in meeting the needs of students with disability in the mainstream classroom. The Australian curriculum is designed to offer this flexibility so teachers can tailor their teaching
Assessment of Achievement	Students with learning difficulties are likely to be beginning at a different level from their classmates, so what matters is the opportunity to access the curriculum and make progress, at a pace that works with appropriate support

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Related policies and procedures

- Disability Discrimination Act (1992)
[Federal Register of Legislation - Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)
- Disability Standards for Education (2005)
[Disability Standards for Education 2005 - Department of Education, Australian Government](#)
- Australian Human Rights Commission (1986).
[Federal Register of Legislation - Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986](#)
- Enrolment Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Primary Student Management Policy
- Secondary Student Management Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy