

SALT Guide Inclusion

Author	Bríd Grady
School	Killeen National School (Ireland)



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1 Introduction

Education is evolving all the time and responding to changes around us. Our environment and the world we live in is changing, and so our schools and education system has adapted. A 'one size fits all' approach is not effective in our classrooms when there are so many variables – in the world at large, but also in our children. There are millions of children born every year and each child is unique, with varying needs and capabilities. It is so important that we look at the children in our classrooms around the world and address their individual educational needs.

2 Special Educational Needs in Primary Schools

There are students in every classroom around the world with additional needs. These needs are varied in nature, ranging from mild to more complex and across physical and intellectual disabilities. Our primary education system now recognizes that the needs of the child with special needs must be addressed within our system and curricula and methodologies must be adapted to cater for those needs. Special schools are an option for many, but most mainstream primary schools have now also moved towards different models in order to meet the needs of pupils with additional needs. Some schools have adapted teaching and learning resources within their mainstream classrooms, while other schools have created specialized units so that children with additional needs benefit from an individual programme and teaching and learning resources. The common factor in the models our mainstream primary schools have adapted is that pupils may benefit from a modified curriculum in many cases, but they also benefit from learning with their peers.







3 Integration vs Inclusion

An integrated classroom is one where pupils with disabilities learn alongside their peers without disabilities. Extra supports help them to access the curriculum and often there will be an individualised education plan in place with the strategies and supports required. There will be input from parents and outside agencies may also be involved in devising this plan. In theory, integration is a positive approach that helps children to become part of a larger group. Practically, its effectiveness is questionable, given that there are so many needs in every classroom.

Inclusion is the merging of special education with mainstream or regular education with the belief that all children are different, learn differently and should have full access to an education which meets their needs. Pupils with disabilities are not expected to adapt within this model, rather the system adapts to meet them exactly where they are at. Different learning styles are met and the barriers of a busy classroom are removed so that all children benefit. When inclusion happens within a school environment, there is real and meaningful integration with peers when and where it works for each pupil and this is when the real magic happens!

4 Our School and Inclusion

Killeen National School is a small, rural school situated on the west coast of Ireland. We are like every other school in that there have always been pupils with Special Educational Needs in attendance, but what sets us apart from neighbouring schools is that despite our low numbers (76 pupils enrolled), we have a special class for pupils with multiple disabilities.

4.1 SUNBEAMS

'Sunbeams' is a purpose-built unit for pupils with low-incidence disabilities. The classification is 'multi-disability', which means that children must present with more than one disability – physical and / or intellectual. We have a low pupil-teacher ratio (6:1) in our 'Sunbeams' class, two full-time Special Needs Assistants and it is equipped with a variety of equipment and resources to enhance the learning of the pupils in the environment.









4.2 MEANINGFUL INTEGRATION

When a programme for each child in 'Sunbeams' is developed and in practice, productive and meaningful integration and reverse integration opportunities can be timetabled to happen. Pupils from the special class attend classes with their mainstream classes which enhance their learning and holistic development. Examples of this are:

- Physical Education
- Art
- Drama
- Music and Movement







4.3 SCHOOL MOTTO

Our school motto is 'Better Together'. We believe that each and every child is unique and an important part of our school jigsaw. We all fit together to complete the puzzle.





4.4 SIGN LANGUAGE AND THERAPIES

Communication is a key factor in the success of an inclusive school. Every child who attends Killeen National School learns our national sign language, 'LÁMH', pronounced 'law – ve'. We hold a weekly 'Lámh' assembly where we celebrate together using our sign language.

Other activities and therapies our pupils in 'Sunbeams' and our pupils in mainstream classes take part in are:

- Lego Therapy
- Art Therapy
- Horse Riding
- Mindfulness
- Drumming







5 Evaluation

In this guide, we have outlined the approach we take to inclusion in our particular school – Killeen National School. Every school and indeed every classroom has a different context with a different cohort of students.

We evaluate our success on student outcomes and the Department Of Education regularly evaluates programmes within our education system. However, in our school success is measured by something that isn't quite tangible – that is why our motto is 'Better Together' for our school family.

Inclusion is not simply about physical proximity, it is about intentionally planning for the success of ALL students!

