



SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY



**MATIJA GUBEC
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
ZAGREB - CROATIA**



Purpose of the SEN Policy

The IB (International Baccalaureate) MYP (Middle Years Programme) students come from different parts of the world, and different cultural and academic backgrounds.

In the Republic of Croatia, children, depending on their needs and resources, can be educated in a:

- Mainstream class in a mainstream school
- Special class in a mainstream school
- Special school.

We believe that a child with special educational needs should be educated in a supportive environment (i.e. mainstream class) with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs would not affect satisfying needs of other children.

In this text we will focus on SEN students that can be educated in mainstream classes, since for others we cannot provide appropriate support to satisfy their needs. Having that in mind, the aim of our school regarding the SEN students in mainstream classes is to provide equal access to all of them regardless of their individual abilities, differences and needs. In order to achieve it we place a great emphasis on school staff's responsibility to be aware of students' special needs and provide them with the support appropriate to their needs. In order to improve the quality of our school we have to develop a supportive learning environment in which every each child will be able to satisfy their needs and feel successful. We believe that the child-parent-school collaboration is very important in order for every child to get the most out of education.

Some of the students have come with recognized/diagnosed special education needs and some of these difficulties are discovered during their school years. Some of them have needs or disabilities that affect their ability to learn and reach their full potentials. However, if we notice that a child has such difficulties that impact his/her learning, according to Croatian legislation and policies in primary schools, Committee for the identification of child's psycho-physical condition makes a detailed assessment of child's difficulties and needs in order to give a recommendation (to the county office – Grad Zagreb in this case) for future education. During this identification process parents might be asked to seek external and clinical assessment of the child. When the process is over, the County office of the City of Zagreb will issue a document about appropriate form of education (more about this in the section Implementation and monitoring).

Definitions

Special educational need (SEN) student – any student that due to cognitive, physical, social or emotional reasons has learning difficulties (much greater than their peers) and that because of these needs has a special educational support. SEN students can be talented and gifted as well, and they deserve special support too.

Special needs can be:

- Visual impairments (including blindness)
- Hearing impairments (including deafness)

- Speech and language impairments and specific learning difficulties (e.g. reading and writing difficulties – dyslexia, dysgraphia)
- Physical impairments and diseases
- Intellectual difficulties
- Difficulties in understanding
- Behavioural difficulties - organically caused
- Concentration difficulties (e.g. ADD, ADHD)
- Emotional and social difficulties (e.g. making friends or relating to adults)
- Autism spectrum disorders.

These special education needs could mean that a child has difficulties with:

- Reading, writing and working with numbers
- Text comprehension and paraphrasing
- Learning
- Proper behaviour
- Establishing relationships (relating to both peers and adults)
- Expressing their feelings and recognizing feelings of others.

Inclusion – “process that aims to increase access to and engagement in learning process for all students, by identifying and removing barriers” (*Special educational needs in IB programmes*). The majority of them, with the right skills training, strategies and support can be successfully included in the mainstream education.

Differentiation – the differentiation is the “process of identifying the most effective strategies for achieving agreed goals” (*Special educational needs in IB programmes*) – developing appropriate curriculum, especially for those who learn slowly (but also for gifted ones) in order to meet different and individual needs of each student.

Implementation and Monitoring

SEN students who are integrated in our mainstream classrooms master the programmes either through curriculum or teaching modifications (individualization only or if it is necessary through shortening the programme). Some students may need school assistant in order to fulfil their full potentials (school assistance might require additional fees). Committee for the identification of child’s psycho-physical condition gives a recommendation if a child needs an assistant. Process of getting an assistant goes through the County office – the City of Zagreb and Ministry of science, education and sport.

Programme Components – Teachers, together with school associate (social pedagogue), are engaged in creating an *Individual educational programme* for each SEN student. Programme, that is appropriate to student's needs, is very important in order to support personal, social-emotional and educational development and prevent inappropriate behaviour that impact their learning and socialization in school. In order to make one it is necessary to take these steps:

- Consider what all students require
- Assess the particular students' needs and resources – address the needs, interests and capacities
- Set the goals to be met
- Set the approaches, methods and strategies that are suited to students' needs and that enable the students to accomplish tasks and feel successful
- Recognize the resources that may be child supportive in meeting the goals that are set
- Affirm identity of a learner through "promoting class and school environment that welcomes and embraces the diversity of learners" (Special educational needs in IB programmes) in order to build self-esteem
- Understand the child's needs and behaviours and help them achieve better relationships with others and feel successful in every way

Assessment

- Monthly – all teachers should be monitoring the progress being made in relation to goals set on a regular basis
- Annually – at the end of the school year annual report will be made in order to give future references, especially for the students who do not respond sufficiently to previous support.
- Collaborative feedback – It is very important that students get collaborative feedback all the time so they know at any time "where they are and where to go".

Support – in order to identify the strengths and resources within a student/teacher and/or parent we offer support on group and individual levels and help all of them in developing skills (e.g. emotional and social competence) to overcome the difficulties. We regularly review the personal needs in order to give the appropriate support. It is very important to maintain a balance between the allocation of necessary care support and the child's right to acquire personal independence skills. It is possible to get the following kinds of support:

- Direct student support (individually or in a group) – curriculum modifications, small group instructions or one-on-one support; classroom accommodations, additional professional support within the school (psychologist, pedagogue and social pedagogue)
- Indirect student support (through teacher and/or parent support – individually or in a group)
- External support when student (or parent) has social and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties that require additional clinical assessment and/or provision of specialist therapies. If student is already involved in other health services school professional might request information from their professionals.
- Teacher support (individually or in a group)
- Parent support (individually or in a group)

Professional Documentation

All information regarding the progress and performance of SEN student will be kept in the student's file. Access to this file will be on "important to know" basis only. Only teachers (relating to subject), school counsellors, MYP coordinator and Principal will have access to this file.

We believe that each student needs an individual approach and it is very important that students get support that is time appropriate and suited to their needs in order to prevent problems and help to feel successful and confident in their knowledge and skills.

SEN students are, among all, students like any other and they have a lot of talents, interests that are very important to maintain and highlight – they can help in building their self-esteem and are a good tool in prevention of behavioural and socio-emotional problems.