

Special Needs Policy at SOS-Hermann Gmeiner International College



Policy Terminology

| Term | Definition |
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| Learning Disability | An umbrella term that describes an individual who is clinically diagnosed as having difficulty learning in a typical manner |
| Learning Difficulties | Trouble acquiring knowledge and skills in one or more subjects to the level expected of those of a similar age group. |
| Physical Disability | A condition that prevents normal body movement and/or control. |
| Emotional and Behavior Difficulty | An umbrella term used to describe specific disorders such as anxiety disorders, bipolar disorders, eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders (OCD) and more. |

Policy Statement

SOS-Hermann Gmeiner International College seeks to provide a school of academic excellence for students from SOS Children's villages from all over Africa, together with students from the host country, Ghana, in a spirit of Pan-Africanism and an awareness of the social needs of society. Two of the school's principal objectives are to present the highest possible standards of education to students showing potential for advanced academic education as well as prepare students for entrance into universities of high international standards. Thus, the admission process is quite stringent. For students who successfully gain admission into the school, the college provides all necessary support to ensure their success in the IB programmes despite having certain special needs.

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of the Special Needs Policy is:

- to outline how the College seeks to support students with special needs
- to classify and specify which students are covered by this policy
- to provide guidance to teachers, parents and students on their roles and responsibilities to ensure effective learning for students with special needs
- to meet the expectations for special needs of the International Baccalaureate Organization.

Physical Disability

Currently, SOSHGIC does not have all the facilities to accommodate students with physical challenges. These facilities will be developed over time. However, with the view of outlining the best possible support the school can provide the student, the Principal will meet with the parents/guardian of the student to discuss the challenges the student will face given the disability. The Student will be offered admission in to the school if all parties involved agree that the students' needs can be met within the school.

Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

Students with emotional and behavioral difficulties usually have an inability to learn due to factors that cannot be explained by intellectual or health factors. Such students engross themselves in behavior that is disruptive to the class and/or harmful to themselves or to others.

The Emotional Counselling Department (ECD) has long been a part of the school. The ECD supports students by providing individual and group sessions based on students' needs such as:

Ongoing support services to

- help students understand and overcome social, emotional or behavioral problems
 - review and update students' Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for those who need them
- help students cope with their special needs.

Furthermore the ECD develops strategies together with staff and parents to help students meet their full potential.

In the case where emotional and/or behavioral challenges are seen to be making learning difficult for a student, a tracking system between the student's teacher, the Emotional Counselling Department, the Vice Principal and the parents/guardians of the child will be initiated to closely monitor challenges and progress.

Learning Support for Students with Learning Disabilities/Difficulties

SOS-HGIC understands that learning disabilities develop before adulthood. However, due to circumstances beyond one's control, some students will only begin showing signs of having a learning disability later on in life. In such situations, the Emotional Counselling Department, in consultation with the parents, will make a referral to an outside agency for assessments. The Principal will advise the parents accordingly depending on the outcome of the assessment.

Also, in support of the International Baccalaureate (IB) requirements, the Emotional Counselling Department aims to

- Identify students who may be having difficulties in one or more subjects.
 - This can be done either through the tracking system, notification by a teacher or a student who himself/herself approaches the Emotional Counsellor.
- Provide students with learning difficulties the support needed to improve in the classroom.
 - Students will be given the opportunity to access the learning support services for assistance.
 - The Heads of Departments (HOD) will arrange learning support for the students
- Provide support to students through 'out of classroom' interventions.
 - Students, who may need support will have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).
- Ensure students receive accommodations for examinations under conditions that are as fair as possible (refer to the procedures outlined in the documents 1 & 2 mentioned under *References* below)
 - Ensure that students receive reasonable forms of accommodations that are fair
- Assist in arranging for training to staff on differentiation in the classroom that includes awareness of the learning difficulties/disabilities of some students so that teaching and learning strategies can provide for the needs of such students
- Liaise with parents regarding the support needs of their wards
- Conduct classroom observations at the request of a teacher or parent.

Responsibility and Accountability for Support

Within limitations of our current provisions and facilities, the College will assist students with identified learning needs.

It is the responsibility of the Heads of the various Departments to monitor and report to the Vice Principal and the Emotional Counselling Department the development of students with learning difficulties and to monitor the students' progress from time to time. Each department will help the student meet their goals.

The parents of such a student will meet with the Vice Principal and the Emotional Counseling Department to discuss the Student's progress when the need arises.

Identification and Review of Student Needs

Parents/guardians are encouraged to be truthful about their Ward's special needs and to support it with all other medical and specialist reports they have in their possession upon admission and if the need arises over the course of their stay at the college.

- Once a student has been identified as having a special need in a particular subject, the teacher will take steps to provide differentiated learning opportunities that will aid the student's academic progression. Each department has its own ways of providing support. These ways can be found in the appendix.
- The Emotional Counselling Department will be consulted for support and advice and to observe the student in class.
- Through the above actions, it will then be determined which level of provision the student would need. If it is observed that the student is having challenges due to a learning disability that can be managed in the school, then the drafting of an IEP will be initiated by the Emotional Counselling Department.
- Parents/guardians will be informed by the Emotional Counselling Department of every stage of their ward's development under which they are being monitored.
- The IEP will be reviewed on a semester basis.

In Service Training

The school takes responsibility for providing adequate training to staff in identifying and assisting students with Special Needs.

Working in Partnership with Families

The school will be in close contact with parents/guardians throughout their ward's education.

- The school will keep parents informed about the content of their ward's IEP and any necessary changes that may be made during the academic year.
- The school will arrange regular meetings with parents/guardians to discuss the progress of their ward.

References

Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme 2015. (2015). Retrieved from http://www.sgs.org/data/files/gallery/IBFileGallery/2015_IB_Handbook.pdf.

Appendix

Support Provided by all Departments in SOS-HGIC

A student's challenge is reported either by alerting Heads of Department during Departmental meetings or by speaking with members of the Emotional Counselling Department.

- Students are identified based on low academic performance or negative behavioural tendencies and attitudes.
- Support lessons are organized by individual teachers (on a case by case basis) outside of class.
- Teachers adopt differentiated teaching and learning strategies, in and out of the classroom, to help both higher achieving students as well as weaker ones.
- There is collaborative support across departments depending on the student's peculiar challenge.
- A school-wide tracking system is available via tracking form to check student progress.