



Shellybanks Educate Together National School

Role of Special Education Unit in Shellybanks ETNS

This year, in Shellybanks ETNS, we have a Special Education Unit that supports all Educational Needs within our school. The model and title of Learning Support has been changed nationally this year and we now have a 'Special Education Unit' in each school. With this comes a new support model for each school and it takes into account mild, general to severe support needs in a school and includes support for children with EAL (English as an Additional Language). Learning Support and Resource Teachers are now referred to as 'Special Education Teachers' and they work as part of a Support Team in school.

Education support is provided through a framework called 'The Continuum of Support'. It is structured in three levels;

1. Whole-school & Classroom Support (team teaching, station teaching)
2. Small group Support (Reading, literacy, numeracy, social and EAL groups)
3. Individual Support (One to one targeted teaching time)

Each level of the Continuum is as important as the other and we endeavour to ensure that all children, at some point in the school year, will have access to one level of support whether is it through in-class support or withdrawal. To determine the classes and groups which will benefit most from support there is also a three-step process involved:

1. Identifying a need through assessment
2. Meeting the need through early intervention approaches (usually in-class)
3. Monitoring and reviewing outcomes to inform next steps for that group or individual.

The current model recommends that the level and nature of support provided to pupils and classes should reflect the specific needs of the pupils. Careful consideration is taken to ensure we provide early intervention to young children as a means of prevention in delays or gaps in their learning.

In this way we aim to optimise the way we provide support to classes, groups and individuals in Shellybanks ETNS. Education support allocation is reviewed regularly and support is provided on a short-term basis (usually 6-8 week block) until we feel the desired outcomes

and targets have been met. In this way a child, group or class will have targeted support for a number of weeks and when sufficient progress has been made the support is then provided to another cohort of children, groups and classes. This is particularly relevant for children who receive EAL support as their learning need and target is to acquire English. We ensure they are supported in this process in a small group lesson for five lessons a week where the most essential vocabulary and language skills are developed.

Education Support also aims to ensure there is a whole-school approach to Well-being and inclusive learning. The area of Well-being and self-esteem building is a very important aspect of Education Support.

It is noteworthy to bear in mind that receiving Education Support is a very positive experience for individuals, group and classes. It provides a reduced teacher to child ratio, it offers targeted support in one area of the curriculum and it boosts children's self confidence and self-esteem to experience success and support in a very positive and encouraging environment.

A final aspect of Education Support is administering Standardised assessments and using the information to guide future practice. Assessments aid in the identification of Educational and learning needs. With each year of development of Education Support in Shellybanks we expand on the range assessments we carry out. This year we had the target of completing individual reading assessments for all children in First and Second class. This was completed in October and each class is now using appropriately graded readers for the children in that class.

Role of Special Needs Assistant in Shellybanks ETNS

Special Needs Assistants (SNA) have a very important role in supporting those with Educational, Medical or Care needs in our school. They support children both physically, emotionally and medically and ensure their time in school is both beneficial, enjoyable and safe. They promote independence, positive behaviours and self-efficacy. Special Needs Assistant support is applied for through the Department of Education and they sanction SNA's to work with individual children. It is important that the SNAs in Shellybanks work as part of a team in the school to ensure that each SNA can provide support to any of the children who have been sanctioned an SNA. In this way there is less disruption to medical and care needs if an SNA was unable to attend work.
