The Primary Mathematics Curriculum was introduced in September 2024, and the wider redeveloped Primary Curriculum specifications were published in September 2025, with phased enactment from 2026/27.

Mathematics Policy

For a Special School Supporting Pupils with Mild General Learning Disabilities

School:	**St. Ultan's Special School Navan, Co. Meath**
Policy Coordinator:	Enez McManus
Date Ratified:	9th - November - '26
Review Date:	December '27
Ratified by Board of Management:	(Yes) / No

1. Policy Statement

Our school is committed to providing a high-quality, inclusive and meaningful mathematics education for every pupil.

We recognise that pupils with mild general learning disabilities may have a wide range of mathematical strengths and needs. Mathematics teaching will therefore be differentiated and responsive to individual developmental levels, while maintaining high expectations for all pupils.

The school will implement the Primary Mathematics Curriculum for Primary and Special Schools, alongside the principles of the redeveloped Primary Curriculum. The Mathematics Curriculum promotes mathematical proficiency through conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, adaptive reasoning, strategic competence and a productive disposition towards mathematics.

Particular emphasis will be placed on enabling pupils to use mathematics confidently, independently and meaningfully in everyday life

2. Rationale

Mathematical skills are essential for pupils' participation in school, family, community and future employment.

For pupils attending our school, mathematics education should extend beyond completing written calculations. It should enable pupils to:

- understand and use numbers;
- solve everyday problems;
- handle money;
- tell and use time;
- measure and compare;
- interpret information;
- make choices and decisions;
- communicate mathematical ideas;
- develop independence;
- apply learning in unfamiliar situations.

The new Primary Mathematics Curriculum emphasises playfulness, creativity, challenge, risk-taking, collaboration, reasoning and real-life problem-solving. These principles are particularly relevant to our pupils and will underpin the school's approach to mathematics.

3. Aims

The school aims to enable pupils to:

- develop a positive attitude towards mathematics;
- experience success and enjoyment in mathematics;
- develop confidence as mathematical learners;
- develop mathematical understanding and fluency;
- develop reasoning and problem-solving skills;
- communicate mathematical thinking;
- use appropriate mathematical vocabulary;
- make connections between different areas of mathematics;
- apply mathematics to real-life situations;
- develop increasing independence in functional numeracy;
- transfer mathematical learning from the classroom to home and community settings;
- recognise the relevance and usefulness of mathematics in everyday life.

4. Curriculum Framework

Mathematics will be planned and taught in accordance with the Primary Mathematics Curriculum for Primary and Special Schools and relevant Department of Education and NCCA guidance. Circular 0039/2023 formally introduced the Primary Mathematics Curriculum for primary and special schools, with implementation commencing in September 2024.

Mathematics learning will encompass:

- Number
- Algebra
- Shape and Space
- Measures
- Data and Chance

These areas will not necessarily be taught in isolation. Teachers will make connections between mathematical concepts and provide opportunities for pupils to apply learning across different contexts.

The school will use the Primary Mathematics Toolkit and progression continua to support planning, teaching and assessment.

5. Mathematics for Pupils with Mild General Learning Disabilities

The school recognises that pupils may:

- progress at different rates;
- require additional repetition and consolidation;
- benefit from concrete and practical experiences;
- require explicit teaching of mathematical vocabulary;
- need visual and multisensory supports;
- require additional processing time;
- demonstrate understanding in ways other than through written work;
- require opportunities to generalise skills across different settings.

Accordingly, teachers will:

- begin with each pupil's existing knowledge and understanding;
- identify appropriate next steps;
- provide appropriate challenge;
- revisit important concepts regularly;
- explicitly teach and reinforce mathematical vocabulary;
- provide opportunities for practical application;
- support pupils to become increasingly independent.

Differentiation will mean providing appropriate access and challenge rather than simply reducing the mathematical content or expectations.

6. Teaching and Learning Approaches

Teachers will use a range of approaches appropriate to individual pupils and learning objectives.

These will include:

- practical, hands-on learning;
- concrete materials and manipulatives;
- visual representations;
- pictorial representations;
- modelling;
- explicit instruction;
- mathematical talk;
- questioning;
- games and playful learning;
- problem-solving;
- collaborative learning;
- outdoor learning;
- community-based learning;
- digital technologies;
- real-life mathematical situations.

Where appropriate, teachers will use a concrete → pictorial → abstract progression.

Pupils will be encouraged to:

- estimate;
- predict;
- investigate;
- explain;
- compare;
- justify;
- make connections;
- try different strategies;
- learn from mistakes.

The school will seek to create a classroom culture in which pupils understand that there can be different ways of approaching a mathematical problem.

7. Mathematical Language

Mathematical vocabulary will be explicitly taught throughout the school.

Teachers will provide opportunities for pupils to:

- hear mathematical language;
- use mathematical vocabulary;
- describe what they notice;
- explain how they solved a problem;
- compare quantities and objects;
- discuss patterns and relationships;
- justify their answers.

Visual vocabulary supports, symbols, photographs, objects, communication systems and other assistive approaches will be used where appropriate.

Examples of vocabulary will include:

- more / less;
- greater / smaller;
- equal;
- before / after;
- longer / shorter;
- heavier / lighter;
- likely / unlikely;
- same / different;
- add / subtract;
- altogether;
- difference;
- estimate;
- measure;
- pattern;
- position;
- direction.

8. Functional Mathematics and Life Skills

Functional numeracy will be a significant element of the school's mathematics provision.

Pupils will have regular opportunities to develop and apply skills involving:

Money

- recognising coins and notes;
- identifying prices;
- comparing prices;
- paying for items;
- calculating change;
- budgeting;
- saving;
- understanding simple personal finances.

Time

- understanding daily routines;
- reading analogue and digital clocks;
- understanding duration;
- using calendars;
- understanding dates;
- reading timetables;
- planning activities.

Measurement

- length;
- height;
- weight/mass;
- capacity;
- temperature;
- distance;
- area where appropriate.

Shopping

- reading prices;
- making choices;
- comparing value;
- calculating totals;
- handling money;
- checking receipts.

Cooking (where appropriate)

- weighing;
- measuring;
- counting;
- following quantities;
- timing;
- scaling recipes where appropriate.

Community

Pupils will apply mathematics in:

- shops;
- cafés;
- public transport;
- libraries;
- leisure facilities;
- school enterprise activities;
- community-based learning;
- trips and outings.

9. Problem-Solving and Mathematical Reasoning

Problem-solving will be an integral part of mathematics teaching.

Pupils will be encouraged to:

- understand the problem;
- identify relevant information;
- select an appropriate strategy;
- use resources;
- try different approaches;
- check answers;
- explain their thinking.

Teachers will use real-life and appropriately challenging problems rather than relying exclusively on routine exercises.

For example:

"We have €10. We need to buy three items. What could we buy?"

rather than simply:

"€10 – €3.50 = ?"

This approach enables pupils to connect mathematical knowledge with purposeful decision-making.

10. Progression and Continuity

The school will develop a whole-school progression framework.

Progression will be based on:

- individual starting points;
- conceptual development;
- increasing independence;
- increasing complexity;
- ability to apply skills in different contexts;
- ability to explain mathematical thinking.

The school will avoid a rigid expectation that all pupils of the same age will be working at the same mathematical level.

Broad progression

Stage 1 – Explore

- sorting;
- matching;
- counting;
- comparing;

- recognising;
- exploring patterns.

Stage 2 – Understand

- representing mathematical ideas;
- developing number concepts;
- using mathematical vocabulary;
- explaining simple thinking.

Stage 3 – Apply

- solving problems;
- selecting strategies;
- using mathematics across subjects.

Stage 4 – Generalise

- applying skills in unfamiliar situations;
- transferring learning to different environments.

Stage 5 – Functional Independence

- using mathematics independently in everyday, community and future employment contexts.

11. Differentiation and Individualised Learning

Mathematics will form part of pupils' individualised learning where appropriate.

Teachers will differentiate through:

- task;
- language;
- resources;
- questioning;
- level of adult support;
- recording method;
- expected independence;
- pace;
- complexity;
- number range;
- practical versus abstract presentation.

Individual targets will be:

- specific;
- achievable;

- meaningful;
- measurable where appropriate;
- reviewed regularly.

Teachers will seek to ensure that pupils are supported without becoming unnecessarily dependent on adult assistance.

12. Assessment

Assessment will be an integral part of teaching and learning.

The school will use:

Assessment for Learning

- questioning;
- observation;
- discussion;
- practical tasks;
- mathematical conversations;
- pupil explanations;
- immediate feedback.

Assessment of Learning

- work samples;
- practical assessments;
- teacher-designed tasks;
- appropriate standardised assessments where applicable;
- evidence of application in real-life situations.

Assessment as Learning

Where appropriate, pupils will be encouraged to:

- identify what they know;
- recognise their own progress;
- discuss challenges;
- identify next steps;
- reflect on successful strategies.

Assessment will be used to inform planning and identify appropriate next steps.

The school will not rely solely on written worksheets or formal tests as evidence of mathematical understanding.

13. Planning

Teachers will engage in:

- long-term planning;
- medium-term planning;
- short-term planning;
- individual target setting where appropriate.

Planning will identify:

- learning intentions;
- relevant curriculum outcomes;
- mathematical concepts;
- key vocabulary;
- resources;
- differentiation;
- opportunities for reasoning;
- problem-solving opportunities;
- assessment opportunities;
- opportunities to apply learning in real-life contexts.

Teachers will use the NCCA curriculum resources and progression continua to support planning.

The Department's guidance on preparation for teaching and learning will also inform whole-school and classroom planning.

14. Cross-Curricular Mathematics

Mathematics will be integrated across the curriculum wherever meaningful.

Examples include:

PE

- counting;
- scoring;
- timing;
- distance;
- measurement.

Science (where appropriate)

- measuring;
- recording;
- tables;
- graphs;

- comparison.

Geography

- maps;
- distance;
- scale;
- data;
- direction.

Art

- shape;
- pattern;
- symmetry;
- position.

Cookery (where appropriate)

- money;
- weighing;
- measuring;
- time.

SPHE/Wellbeing

- personal finance;
- time management;
- personal information;
- decision-making.

ICT

- data;
- digital numeracy;
- patterns;
- problem-solving.

15. Digital Technology

Digital technology will be used where it enhances mathematical learning.

This may include:

- tablets;
- interactive whiteboards;
- calculators;
- digital clocks;

- mathematical games;
- appropriate educational applications;
- digital money;
- online shopping simulations;
- digital timetables.

Technology will complement rather than replace the development of pupils' mathematical understanding.

16. Resources

The school will provide a range of resources appropriate to pupils' developmental levels.

These may include:

- Numicon;
- counters;
- cubes;
- linking blocks;
- number lines;
- hundred squares;
- dice;
- clocks;
- coins and notes;
- weighing scales;
- measuring equipment;
- rulers and tape measures;
- calendars;
- timetables;
- visual supports;
- games;
- puzzles;
- ICT/digital resources;
- real-life materials.

Resources will be reviewed regularly to ensure that they are:

- appropriate;
- accessible;
- inclusive;
- in good condition;
- sufficiently varied;
- relevant to pupils' needs.

17. Home, School and Community Links

The school recognises the importance of families in developing mathematical understanding.

Parents/carers may be encouraged to practise mathematics through everyday activities such as:

- shopping;
- cooking;
- telling the time;
- handling money;
- using calendars;
- measuring;
- playing games;
- planning journeys.

Where appropriate, teachers will share pupils' mathematics targets and suggest practical activities that can be incorporated into daily life.

The school will also provide opportunities for pupils to apply mathematics within the wider community.

18. Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management

The Board will:

- ratify the policy;
- support its implementation;
- review the policy as required;
- ensure appropriate resources are available within the school's resources.

Principal

The Principal will:

- oversee implementation;
- support staff development;
- facilitate appropriate planning time;
- monitor whole-school provision;
- ensure the policy is reviewed.

Mathematics Coordinator: Enez McManus Junior School Coordinator

Senior School Coordinator

The Mathematics Coordinator's will:

- coordinate whole-school mathematics in Junior/Senior School;
- support teachers;
- assist with progression planning;

- promote good practice;
- coordinate resource development;
- identify CPD needs;
- monitor implementation;
- contribute to policy review.
- Organise Maths Week yearly

Teachers

Teachers will:

- plan and teach mathematics appropriately;
- differentiate learning;
- assess pupil progress;
- maintain appropriate records;
- provide meaningful mathematical experiences;
- collaborate with colleagues;
- communicate with parents/carers where appropriate.

Special Needs Assistants

SNAs will:

- support pupils in accessing mathematics activities;
- encourage independence;
- use agreed strategies and resources;
- reinforce, rather than replace, teacher instruction;
- support pupils to transfer skills into practical contexts.

19. Staff Development

The school will support ongoing professional learning in mathematics.

Priority areas may include:

- the Primary Mathematics Curriculum;
- mathematical proficiency;
- teaching pupils with mild general learning disabilities;
- maths talk;
- problem-solving;
- mathematical reasoning;
- differentiation;
- concrete and visual approaches;
- functional numeracy;
- assessment;
- mathematical vocabulary.

The Department has confirmed that support for the new curriculum is being provided through a phased programme, including whole-school support, and that special schools have access to specific curriculum support through the NCSE Primary Curriculum team.

20. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Mathematics Coordinator's and Principal will monitor the implementation of this policy through:

- review of planning;
- classroom observation;
- review of pupil work;
- assessment information;
- pupil progress;
- teacher feedback;
- pupil voice;
- parent/carer feedback where appropriate;
- resource audits.

The school will consider whether:

- pupils are making appropriate progress;
- pupils are becoming increasingly independent;
- mathematics is being applied beyond the maths lesson;
- pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards mathematics;
- teaching reflects the new curriculum;
- differentiation is appropriate;
- assessment informs planning;
- staff have appropriate resources and professional learning.

21. Policy Implementation and Review

This policy will be implemented from:

November 2026

It will be reviewed: November 2027

Annually, or earlier where significant changes occur in:

- national curriculum requirements;
- Department of Education guidance;
- NCCA guidance;
- NCSE guidance;
- school context;
- pupil needs.

The current redeveloped Primary Curriculum is being introduced on a phased basis, with schools supported through the enactment process.

22. Ratification

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management of:

St. Ultan's Special School

on:

Date: 9th - November - '26

Signed:

Chairperson of Board of Management:

[signature]

Principal:

Jean Cunningham

Date:

9th November '26

Next Review Date:

December '27

Appendix 1 — Whole-School Mathematics Priorities

For the academic year 2026/27, the school will prioritise:

1. Functional Numeracy
    - Money
    - Time
    - Measurement
    - Data

2. Mathematical Communication
    - Vocabulary
    - Maths talk
    - Explaining thinking

3. Problem-Solving
    - Practical problems
    - Real-life situations
    - Making choices

4. Concrete and Practical Learning
    - Manipulatives
    - Visual representations
    - Real-world materials

5. Progression and Assessment
    - Identifying individual starting points
    - Clear next steps
    - Consistent assessment
    - Transfer and generalisation

Appendix 2

School Mathematics Statement

"At our school, every pupil is a mathematician. We believe that mathematics should be meaningful, enjoyable, practical and accessible to all. Through the new Primary Mathematics Curriculum, we will support pupils to develop mathematical understanding, confidence, reasoning and problem-solving skills and, most importantly, to use mathematics successfully in everyday life. We will celebrate individual progress, encourage independence and provide pupils with opportunities to apply mathematics in the classroom, at home and in their community."