Collaboration between Education Staff and Interdisciplinary Therapy Staff in OLGC School- Policy 2025/2026

School Address*: Our Lady of Good Counsel School,*

Innishmore, Ballincollig, Cork. P31FH22

Phone number: *0214878370*

Roll number: *18208A*

School Patron: *The Bishop of Cork and Ross, Bishop Fintan Gavin*.

Principal: *Aisling Power*.

Deputy Principal: *Nollaig Moynihan.*

Chairperson: *Harold Brooks*

Policy Statement

At our special school, collaboration is central to providing high quality, holistic support for every pupil. We recognise that the best outcomes are achieved when all members of the school community work together with shared goals, mutual respect, and open communication.

This collaborative approach involves pupils, teachers, Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs), Occupational Therapists (OTs), school management, parents, and external professionals working together to support each pupil's educational, communication, social, emotional and physical development.

Principles of Effective Collaboration

Our collaborative practice is based on the following principles:

- Open, respectful and regular communication.
- Shared goals centred on the needs and strengths of the pupil.
- Recognition and valuing of each professional's expertise and contribution.
- Consultation and active listening between all team members.
- Joint planning, implementation and review of programmes and interventions.
- A commitment to supporting pupils in meaningful, real-life contexts.
- Respect for professional roles, responsibilities and governance structures.

Professional Relationships

The school recognises and values the specialist expertise that therapists bring to the educational setting. Management actively supports interdisciplinary collaboration by providing therapists with dedicated office space and appropriate facilities to carry out their work effectively within the school community.

While Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists work closely alongside teachers, SNAs and school leadership, it is recognised that therapists are employed and line-managed through their respective health service structures. Therapists do not report to the Principal but work in partnership with the educational team to support shared pupil outcomes.

This clear understanding of roles fosters positive professional relationships, mutual respect and effective collaborative practice.

Role of Pupils and Families

Pupils are active participants in their own learning and therapy programmes. Their interests, preferences, communication methods and individual goals help shape interventions and activities. Families are valued partners whose insights contribute significantly to planning and decision-making.

Examples of Effective Collaborative Practice

AAC Breakfast Club

A strong example of successful interdisciplinary collaboration is our AAC Breakfast Club.

This initiative brings together pupils who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems in a relaxed and meaningful social environment. Pupils bring their communication devices and participate in structured opportunities to:

- Communicate with peers.
- Develop social interaction skills.
- Order their breakfast using their AAC systems.
- Increase confidence and independence in real-life communication situations.

At the same time, another group of pupils works in the cookery room with the Occupational Therapist and cookery teacher. Together they prepare toast and breakfast items, develop functional life skills, take orders from their peers and engage in meaningful communication and social interaction.

The activity is collaboratively planned and overseen by Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, teaching staff and supported by SNAs. The success of the programme demonstrates how shared expertise and joint working can provide authentic learning opportunities that support communication, independence and participation.

Structured Morning Movement Programme

A second example of effective collaboration is the school's structured morning movement programme.

During the breakfast club session, groups of pupils participate in outdoor physical activity under a programme designed by the Occupational Therapist. The programme aims to:

- Prepare pupils for learning.
- Increase alertness and engagement.
- Support regulation of the nervous system.
- Promote physical wellbeing and participation.

Activities initially focus on energising movement and are then followed by calming and organising exercises to support pupils in achieving an optimal state for learning. Teaching staff, SNAs and therapists work together to implement the programme and monitor its effectiveness.

As a result, pupils return to their classrooms better prepared for tabletop learning, group activities and other educational tasks.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The school is committed to maintaining and strengthening collaborative practices through:

- Regular multidisciplinary meetings.
- Shared planning and problem solving.
- Ongoing professional dialogue.
- Professional learning opportunities.
- Reflection on pupil outcomes and experiences.

Through strong communication, mutual respect and a shared commitment to pupil success, the school will continue to foster a collaborative culture that enables all members of the school community to thrive.

Conclusion

Collaboration is one of the school's greatest strengths. By valuing the expertise of teachers, SNAs, therapists and management, and by placing pupils at the centre of all decision-making, we create an environment where communication, participation, independence and wellbeing can flourish. The AAC Breakfast Club and Structured Morning Movement Programme are excellent examples of how effective collaboration translates into meaningful, enjoyable and successful experiences for pupils every day.