Introduction
The St Brigid’s College community consists of members with diverse learning abilities and needs. People with learning differences may not necessarily have an intellectual disability that directly affects their ability to learn. Students with special educational needs may display difficulties that are a barrier to learning and therefore need particular teaching strategies for classroom, management and effective education. It is also important to remember that people with learning differences may also be gifted whose talents have yet to be displayed. Learning differences encompasses and recognises the diversity of learning needs and experiences.

The St Brigid’s College, Learning Differences Programme aims to -

• enhance the confidence and self-esteem of all students;
• facilitate students’ effective participation in the curriculum;
• nurture a culture of valuing differences; and
• support students in their learning experiences.

The programme recognises the needs of students who may -

• require acceleration and/or enrichment of learning and teaching programmes;
• require intervention due to specific learning difficulties;
• require additional support at school due to their special needs, and
• require intervention because English is not their mother language or first dialect.

Rationale
All learners need a supportive environment with quality teaching that builds on their strengths. The Learning Differences programme focuses in particular on the literacy and numeracy needs of students at the College. Education for students with diverse learning needs focuses on the whole student, respecting the individual and valuing differences. As part of our community, students with diverse learning needs have the right to learn with their age and ability peers and be engaged in learning that is appropriate to their skills and needs.
The Learning Differences Policy adheres to the values of the College where teaching and learning goals are to -

- Enable every student to seek and develop the best in themselves and others.
- Allow learners to give witness to Christ’s teaching, whilst meeting the needs of all learners and catering to the range of learning styles and abilities of our students, providing opportunities which empower them, and allows them to access information effectively.
- Promote a sense of belonging and cooperation, which values the contributions of all members of the community.
- Honour the uniqueness of the individual and promote respect for others and the earth.
- Empower learners to search for truth and have the courage to act with integrity.
- Enable all learners to be resilient and to enjoy life-long learning.
- Enable students to have a richer appreciation of the gift of learning.

Whole College Aims

The College staff in collaboration with the Learning Differences team will -

- Protect and foster the dignity of each student with learning differences.
- Foster a secure, safe, caring and accepting College environment.
- Give students every opportunity to develop the skills necessary to adapt to the challenges and changes of life. By doing so allowing for the development of self-concept and self-esteem.
- Promote an environment in the classroom which allows for the acceptance of the uniqueness and differences of each student.
- Differentiate the curriculum to individually cater for student needs.
- Implement Curriculum Adjustment and Individual Education Plans as needed; this is done in consultation with parents, student and the Curriculum Team Leader - Learning Differences.

Role of Curriculum Team Leader - Learning Differences and the Learning Differences team

- Identify and coordinate and/or help teachers with the identification of students who may benefit from extension in learning programmes through standardised testing and teacher feedback.
- Identify and coordinate and/or help teachers with the identification of students who may have literacy and/or numeracy difficulties through standardised testing and teacher feedback.
- Provide data for the Curriculum Team Leader – Mathematics to assist in identifying and catering for the numeracy learning needs of students in Year 7 and incoming Year 8 and 9 students.
- Provide support for teachers and promote differentiation of subject programmes.
- Support teachers in an inclusive approach to programming.
- Liaise with parents/guardians and class teachers to meet student needs and implement recommendations that arise from testing.
- Monitor student progress and maintain records of students identified with specific learning needs.

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- Formulate and implement Individual Education and Curriculum Adjustment Plans in conjunction with Heads of School, Year Team Leaders, class teachers and parents.
- Liaise with teachers, educational assistants, team leaders and Head of Junior School to support students identified with specific needs.
- Provide support for teachers to cater for the diverse needs of students within their classes.
- Coordinate and implement programmes that support enrichment for our students. Eg. Da Vinci Decathlon, Optiminds, Robotics.

Identification of Learning Differences
A variety of methods are employed to identify learning differences amongst students.

- PIPS assessment is undertaken early in the Pre-Primary year, to ascertain the Literacy and Numeracy skills of children entering the formal school setting.
- INCas testing is conducted with all Year One, Year Two and Year Three students.
- Words Their Way spelling test is conducted in years 1 to 9.
- NAPLAN assessments in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 are analysed to provide further data in identifying children with learning differences.
- Incoming primary schools are sent Student Profile forms to complete and return to the College with the aim of gathering further data on the learning needs of our students.
- Orientation Days testing is conducted for incoming Year 7 and all new Year 8 students: ACER General Ability Test (AGAT), PAT – Maths.
- Incoming Indigenous students in Secondary School are tested further for literacy when they arrive for Orientation with the goal of early identification so that necessary support at school and at Boarding can be put into place: Neale Analysis of Reading, Test of Word Reading Efficiency [TOWRE] and writing sample.
- Further literacy testing is carried out for those students identified with specific learning needs through standardised testing and teacher feedback.
- Referral to psychologist or external consultants as required for detailed ability testing (for example WISC IV).