

NIS International School

Inclusion Policy



Approved and Reviewed by:	Principal
Date of review:	May 2023
Date of next review:	May 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

All children have the right to a broad and balanced curriculum matched to their needs, abilities, and aptitudes. NIS International Private School (NIS) seeks to promote the integration of children with differences into the general learning environment. NIS fully supports the principle of inclusion- each child is ensured access to high-quality education through intentional planning and integration into the school community. We recognize the potential of each individual in our school community and, in partnership with parents, we aim to promote a sense of well-being and achievement through academic, social, and emotional learning.

The purpose of the NIS Inclusion Policy is to outline the processes necessary to enroll, refer, and service students who have Special Education Needs, students who are English Language Learners, and Gifted and Talented students. The Inclusion Department works collaboratively with the Senior Leadership Team, students, parents, teachers, learning support assistants, and external service providers to ensure an inclusive ethos throughout the school and beyond.

2. VISION

Our vision is to be a leading institution that champions the rights and well-being of special needs students, and fosters an inclusive and supportive culture of learning. We aspire to create an environment that values diversity, promotes equity and ensures access to high-quality education for all students. Through our commitment to the NIS TORCH values, we strive to inspire and empower our students to become future innovators who can address global challenges with sustainable solutions.

3. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

UAE Disability Act, Federal Law (29) 2006 and 2009, which guarantees a Person of Determination access to equal opportunities of education within all educational institutions.

Dubai Law No. (2) 2014 'to protect the rights of People of Determination in the Emirate of Dubai'. Executive Council Resolution No. (2) 2017 Regulating Private Schools in the Emirate of Dubai. Including particular reference to Article 4 clause 14; Article 13, clauses 16, 17, 19; Article 23, clause 4, specifically:

- Article 4 Clause 14: To establish the conditions, rules, and standards that are required to facilitate the enrolment and integration of Students with disabilities in Private Schools;
- Article 13 Clause 16: To treat its Students equitably and not discriminate against them on grounds of nationality, race, gender, religion, social class, or special educational needs of Students with disabilities;
- Article 13 Clause 17: To admit Students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of its Educational Permit, the rules adopted by the KHDA, and the relevant legislation in force;
- Article 13 Clause 19: To provide all supplies required for conducting the Educational activity, including devices, equipment, furniture, and other supplies which the KHDA deems necessary, such as the supplies required by Students with disabilities;
- Article 23 Clause 4: To provide a special needs friendly environment and academic programs appropriate for Students with disabilities in accordance with the rules and conditions determined by the KHDA and the concerned Government Entities in this respect.

4. ADMISSIONS

The Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework (2017) ensures that the admission of students of determination within all private schools is supported. Schools must not refuse to admit students of determination because of their experience of disability. To ensure all students are allocated with the appropriate support, a MAP assessment is conducted as the first step of the admissions process. In the event that the Admissions Team determines that the student may have additional needs, or the family discloses that the student has additional needs, an appointment with the Head of Inclusion will be arranged to assess the student and meet with their family. NIS will collect all relevant information to evaluate each student's needs in order to adequately plan the appropriate provision. Outside assessments may be recommended and internal assessments and observations will be conducted upon enrollment. All students with special education needs, including English as an Additional Language (EAL), are welcome at NIS.

Information that is collected to determine entry to the Inclusion Department includes, but is not limited to:

- Academic and progress reports from previous schools
- MAP Scores from admissions assessment
- CAT4 Assessment
- English Proficiency test results (external and/or administered at NIS)
- Home Language Survey
- Formal diagnostic assessments, preferably from a KHDA approved provider
- Medical reports
- Psychological and/or therapy reports
- Parental interviews with the Head of Inclusion
- Student interviews/observations

Once all data has been collected and reviewed, the Registrar will complete the admissions process and notify the Head of Inclusion regarding the details of the new student. The Head of Inclusion will then disseminate the information to the Inclusion team and classroom teachers for provision planning.

5. REFERRAL PROCESS: THE STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM (SST)

It is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to monitor the progress and attainment of each student assigned to them. Every effort is made to identify additional needs during the admissions process; however, some needs may not be identified until the student is attending class.

The Student Support Team is a proactive problem-solving approach to supporting students who are falling behind academically. The team determines the level of support a child needs or whether or not the child is eligible to receive special education services. The purpose is to design a support system aligned to the student's specific area of need to increase the success of the student in the general learning environment. Members of the team include the school Principal, Head and Assistant Head of the Elementary and Secondary school, the School Counselor, and the Head of Inclusion.

The referring party should complete the SST Referral Form once Tier 1 interventions have been exhausted. The form must be submitted with supporting documentation of the interventions used and their effectiveness to the Head of Inclusion for review. Once the referral is approved, an SST Meeting will be scheduled with relevant parties who will problem-solve and agree to the next steps. A plan of action will be documented, and a follow-up meeting will be scheduled.

At the follow-up meetings, the team will review the effectiveness of the Learning Support Plan. The team may decide to continue the current interventions with the same or increased frequency and intensity, try new interventions, refer the student for further assessment or, if the issue has been resolved, bring the SST process to a close.

6. RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION: A MULTI-TIER APPROACH

Our multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning. These services may be provided by a variety of personnel, including classroom teachers, special educators, and specialists. Progress is closely monitored to assess both the learning rate and level of performance of individual students. Educational decisions about the intensity and duration of interventions are based on individual student responses to instruction.

Tier I - QUALITY CORE INSTRUCTION

Quality Core Instruction in the general education classroom is the foundation of Response to Intervention. Within Tier I, intervention is delivered by the classroom teacher. Classroom teachers will implement researched-based intervention strategies as well as use differentiated instruction and universal design for learning to support the student. A member of the Inclusion Team will perform observations and monitor the students' progress closely and the student will be screened on a periodic basis to establish an academic and behavioral baseline. At this stage, the Inclusion Team will gather information to support the teacher and the student in the classroom. Evidence is gathered through MAP and CAT 4 assessments, formative and summative assessments, and classroom observations.

At the end of this period, students who show significant progress are generally returned to the regular classroom program. Students who do not show adequate progress are moved to Tier II. A meeting will be scheduled with the parents to discuss the findings. Parents may be requested to provide the school with a psycho-educational assessment if learning barriers are evident.

Tier 2 - SUPPLEMENTAL SUPPORT

The goal of Tier 2 is to provide targeted intervention supports to close academic gaps as quickly as possible. Tier 2 services are triggered when a student does not make expected progress given quality core instruction and classroom-based interventions at Tier 1 are unsuccessful. Supplemental support may also be rendered if formal benchmark assessments indicate that a student is one or more grade levels behind. Tier 2 interventions are in addition to, not in place of, Tier 1 instruction, and targets specific skills. Tier 2 interventions take place in small group settings with students on similar instructional levels. Instruction may be provided by a member of the Inclusion Department. Ideally, students will rotate in and out of interventions at intervals of six to nine weeks, depending on need. Tier 2 Targeted Intervention is for both academic skills and behavior and includes both in-school and out-of-school time programs.

Tier 3 - INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

Students who do not achieve the desired level of progress in response to Tier 2 interventions are referred for a comprehensive evaluation and considered for special education needs services. The data collected during Tier I and II as well as a diagnosis from an external KHDA approved provider is used to make the decision for SEN eligibility services.

At this tier, the Inclusion Team will design an individualized program of an intervention designed to lower the barrier to learning identified during the referral process. Intensive interventions are based on their level of need and may require the support of a Learning Support Assistant (LSA), which will be employed by the parents. Depending on the students' needs the school may require the student to undergo external therapy services if the school is not able to provide such during school hours.

7. INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS: A CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT

THE SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS PROGRAM

Once a student reaches Tier III, an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) will be created. The Inclusion Team will collect all relevant data from the parents such as external assessments and previous school records. The classroom teacher will start with observations, assessments, and intervention strategies to acquire knowledge of the student's behavior and academic performance. Once the eligibility has been evaluated, all the data has been collected from the classroom teachers and the Inclusion Team will meet to discuss the student's areas of strength, weakness, opportunity, and threats (SWOT analysis) and create intentional SMART goals. Where appropriate, students will be included in the discussion.

Once the IEP is drafted a meeting will be scheduled with the parents where all the information on the IEP is discussed at great length. The parents will then give their contribution before the IEP is signed by all parties stating their knowledge and consent to implement the IEP. The IEP will be monitored regularly, and weekly progress will be tracked by classroom teachers, the Inclusion Team, and Learning Support Assistants if applicable.

The IEP team is to review the student's IEP quarterly to monitor progress and adjust goals as needed. The IEP team is to address any lack of expected progress toward the annual goals and in the general education curriculum, if appropriate.

The purpose of reevaluation is to decide (a) if the student continues to be an SEN student, (b) whether additions or modifications to special education services are needed to help the student meet the measurable annual goals and to participate in the general curriculum, and (c) whether the student continues to need special education services. A reevaluation may or may not require new assessments.

The English as an Additional Language Program

The English as an Additional Language Program (EAL) is designed to provide English Language Learners (ELL) with the relevant knowledge and skills in the social and academic language of instruction. Effective delivery models of instruction aligned to students' proficiency levels are used to achieve these targets. The IDEA Online English Language Proficiency Test is administered at the beginning of the school year or upon enrollment to determine what level of EAL support is needed. Additionally, a Home Language Survey Form is issued upon the student's enrollment to determine first and second language proficiency status.

Student support in EAL occurs through pull-out and push-in instruction. Intensive skills-based English Language Learning support is provided for beginners (low proficiency or no English) through explicit English language instruction following a researched-based curriculum that targets reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills following the AERO Common Core standards. EAL teachers also support the mainstream teacher through professional development, collaboration, workshops, and one-on-one conferences, assistance in differentiation, provision of relevant websites and links, and glossaries for specific academic language for new content/concepts.

THE GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM

NIS aims to ensure that all potential and identified Gifted and Talented students have access to an extensive, enriched, personalized, and differentiated curriculum that meets their individual needs. The school also aims to promote a cross-curricular approach to teaching and learning, which is simultaneously aligned by innovation, to fully enable the giftedness and talents of each identified student.

While providing enrichment and a broad spectrum of educational opportunities, the Gifted education program encourages the individual student to develop personal responsibility, task commitment, self-discipline, independent learning skills, respectful conduct, and social-emotional balance. The development of critical thinking, problem-solving, communication skills, and creativity is shared collaboratively among the Gifted student, the parents, and the NIS educational community.

The Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP) is the framework of a student's program and should consist of information that is useful in providing appropriate programming and support services. This is an annual summary that includes all curricular areas in which a Gifted student is to receive an education that is adapted and differentiated to provide opportunities to participate in acceleration or enrichment, or both, as appropriate to the student's needs.

A GIEP meeting must be held at least annually, and when a parent/guardian or teacher requests a meeting to develop, review, or revise a student's plan. At the conclusion of the GIEP meeting, parents are

provided with a formal opportunity to agree or disagree with the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or the provision of their gifted/talented child(ren) as indicated in the GIEP.

8. ASSESSMENT POLICY

Students' ability to access an assessment is based on their individual learning needs. At NIS we ensure that assessments for SEN students are equitable and promote fairness where their individual barriers to learning may hinder their ability to demonstrate mastery of curriculum objectives.

Effective assessment within school starts with everyone having a clear understanding of the purpose and being confident to use a range of assessment types. Most SEN students will have their needs met through quality core classroom instruction. Day-to-day formative assessment through observation, questioning and records enables the teacher to know about an individual child's needs and plan next steps for learning and development.

At NIS we adapt the curriculum and make it more accessible for students with SEN through:

- Individualized Education Plans
- Appropriate teaching methodology
- Providing on-going professional development training to all classroom teachers and assistants
- Learning Support Assistants
- Differentiated materials

When teachers are creating summative or benchmark assessments, it is important to consider the following for students with identified needs:

- Is it appropriate for the student to be given this assessment?
- What adjustments and accommodations can be put in place to support the student?
- Do formal arrangements need to be made through the Inclusion Department so the student can access the assessment?

Support for Modified Assessments from Inclusion Department

On the whole, classroom teachers are responsible for the creation and administration of assessments, both formative and summative, for SEN and EAL students, including those on a modified curriculum.

When formal arrangements need to be made through the Inclusion Department to ensure the student can access the assessment, the classroom teacher must consult SEN and EAL specialist teachers at minimum one week prior to assessments being due to middle level leaders and/or the Data and Assessment Department. This gives both parties an opportunity to ensure assessments are aligned with the content and skills covered over the course of the unit and can fairly assess the students' abilities.

9. LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANTS

OVERVIEW

The Learning Support Assistant (LSA) plays a critical role in the development of a fully inclusive classroom. By lowering barriers to learning, an LSA provides full access to the general education setting to students who would otherwise face challenges. NIS provides ongoing oversight and professional development to LSAs hired by both parents and the school to ensure they are fully qualified and effective in their roles.

GUIDELINES

The NIS policies and procedures for the Learning Support Assistant provision are strictly aligned to the standards set forth by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), the governing entity of private schools in Dubai.

From “Implementing Inclusive Education: A Guide for Schools” (KHDA, 2019)

*A minority of students may require access to high levels of specialist provision and support to enable their **full engagement in appropriate learning experiences**. This may include full time personalized support by a trained LSA or access to specialist therapeutic services. In these cases, it may be feasible that parents incur additional costs.”*

From “Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework” (KHDA, 2017)

4.12 Ensure that, when learning support assistants are employed by the parents of students who experience SEND, the school implements a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that clearly sets out the terms and conditions of employment within the school. This should include information about professional induction, monitoring and training requirements, line management procedures, the code of conduct, expected levels of professional practice, assessment, marking and feedback procedures, confidentiality and levels of accountability.

4.13 Learning support assistants will be required to:

- a) Contribute to the education of students in inclusive schools and classrooms by implementing small-group and individual instruction.*
- b) Engage in class-wide monitoring of student learning (e.g., independent or small-group work) identified and planned by teachers and the Inclusion Support Team.*
- c) Prepare learning materials for use by student(s) under the direction of the teacher.*
- d) Collect formative assessment data on student performance and progress, based on systems designed by teachers or Inclusion Support Team.*
- e) Assist students who require personal care support (e.g., eating, using the bathroom, dressing).*
- f) Facilitate peer interactions based on guidance from the teacher and Inclusion Support Team. Invite students to help.*
- g) Facilitate peer interactions based on guidance from the teacher and Inclusion Support Team. Invite students to help each other and, as required, also engage in non-instructional tasks (e.g., group supervision such as in the cafeteria, on the playground, bus boarding, field trips) identified by teachers and the Inclusion Support Team.*
- h) Apply current best practices and strategies learned through professional development courses, in-service training or workshops.*

APPOINTMENT OF A LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANT

The Inclusion Department at NIS considers a variety of factors when determining that a student requires a Learning Support Assistant for full access to the general education setting. These factors include, but are not limited to:

- Internal and External Assessments (MAP, CAT4, etc.)
- Psychoeducational Assessments administered by an approved provider
- Data Collection, SEN Intervention Record, Risk Assessment, and SEN Observation
- SEN Category of Eligibility
- Individual Education Plan Goals

- Classroom Teacher Recommendations
- Student Grade Level
- Class Size
- Previous Learning Support Assistant Provision

PROVISION OF SERVICES

Per KHDA, NIS must approve the Learning Support Assistant. This includes, but is not limited to, an interview with the Head of Inclusion, classroom observation, review of credentials, and reference checks.

Additionally, NIS has the authority to ascribe a reasonable timeline for the appointment of a Learning Support Assistant. A student may attend school for no more than one month (20 consecutive school days) without a Learning Support Assistant. After that time, the student will have an official suspension. The school will then select an LSA for the student. The parent is responsible for all costs related to the school-selected LSA.

REGISTRATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Learning Support Assistant must register with the Inclusion Department prior to beginning work. The following documents must be submitted for registration:

- Good Conduct Certificate (Police Clearance)
- Passport Information Page
- Emirates ID
- Visa
- Resume
- Post-secondary degree (where applicable)
- Appointment Letter (signed by parents)
- NIS Confidentiality Clause
- No Objection Certificate (where applicable)

LSA AND HOME/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Consistent and transparent communication and collaboration between the Learning Support Assistant, SEN Department, classroom teachers and family is a key component of establishing an effective learning environment for the student. NIS implements various methods to facilitate effective communication of student progress, success, and concerns alike.

- LSAs are the first line of communication between home and school. It is expected that they give the family regular updates of student progress.
- The LSA will be contacted primarily by email and the LSA WhatsApp group, moderated by a member of the Inclusion Department.
- All important notices will be posted on the board outside the Inclusion Main Office.
- In an emergency, LSAs may be contacted by phone.
- Daily data tracking aligned to IEP goals must be completed by the LSA.
- A communication diary may also be completed by LSAs. Behavioral, emotional, physical and social incidents and data are to be recorded in this diary.
- All physical contact (of note) or other serious incidents are to be reported to the Head of Inclusion in-person or via email. Incidents will be entered on the Engage Portal (as a digital resource).

STUDENTS WHO HAVE LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANTS

All students supported by a Learning Support Assistant will have an Individual Education Plan. The IEP is developed annually. Quarterly reviews will update the family on progress, attainment, and discussion of new targets/goals. The Inclusion Department leads the IEP writing and subsequent reviews in consultation with the class teacher, subject teachers, the LSA, the parents, the student (where appropriate), and outside agencies.

Reviews may include:

- Present Levels of Performance (PLOPs)
- Goal progress: met, not met, and partly met
- New goals: determined on a short term/long term basis.
- Achievement criteria
- Resources, strategies, and techniques
- Parent contribution

LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANT PHASE-OUT PLAN

In some circumstances, a Learning Support Assistant will be required for the duration of the students' K-12 program. For others, the support of an LSA will result in student independence in the general education setting.

A Phase-Out Plan will be developed alongside the students' IEP when the student begins to show signs of independence. The Phase-Out Plan is a gradual process that gives the student time to adjust to the changes in supervision and experience their achievement.

The Phase-Out Plan is outlined in a step by step fashion that ends up with a discontinuation of one-to-one support. Criteria are identified for expanding or generalizing the phase-out to specific times and/or settings. Additionally, criteria for abandoning the Phase-Out Plan, going back one step, etc. should also be specified.